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Nemo

the classic comics library

THE HAUNTING BEAUTY OF WHITE BOY

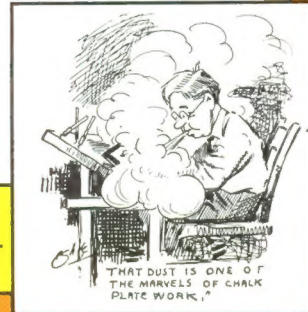


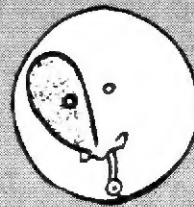
The Cartoon Art Of Norman Rockwell

PLUS: WILLIAM FAULKNER AND THE COMIC STRIPS...

...THE DAYS OF THE CHALK PLATE CARTOON...

...AND THE WEIRDEST CARTOON SERIES OF ALL TIME!





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He was America's most beloved illustrator, the artist who chronicled our everyday preoccupations, making the mundane majestic. But before Norman Rockwell settled into his trademark style of magazine covers, his paintings were largely painted gags—cartoons with captions and titles; and he drew for the most prominent cartoon magazines of the day. Editor Rick Marschall, who recently researched and scripted a video documentary of Rockwell, offers an analysis and reprints some Rockwell work that has not seen publication since the artist's beginning days of the 'teens and '20s!

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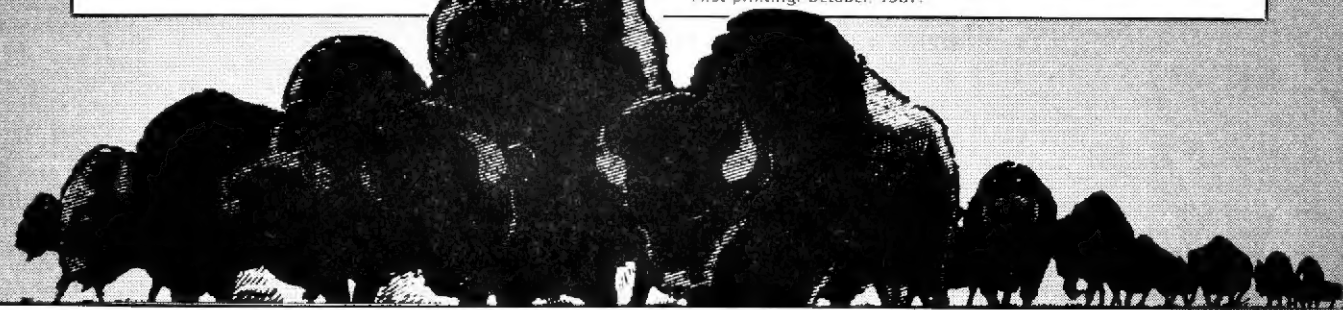
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- 10 Christmas issue, with a portfolio of cartoonists' Christmas cards. Also, Gustave Verbeek's *Upside Downs*. Mell (*Miss Peach*) Lazarus interviewed. Ray Ewer, and *Mutt and Jeff*
- 11 *Sam's Strip*, by Walker and Browne, premieres: "Dwig's" cartoons; giant Charles Dana Gibson portfolio; James Montgomery Flagg remembered; and the forgotten antics of *Slim Jim*.
- 12 The cartoonists who fought World War II; Frank King's most fantastic strip; Jack Williamson and Lee Elias's *Beyond Mars* SF strip; and penwoman Rose O'Neill.
- 13 Big half-year sequence from Will Gould's classic, violent *Red Barry: Major Hoople*; a look back at TAD; and another installment of *Sam's Strip*.
- 15 A long sequence from Milton Caniff's *Dickie Dare* reprinted; *Tim Tyler's Luck*; *Hairbreadth Harry* continues; an extra-long "European Heroes" installment; plus reviews and letters.
- 16 A retrospective of the comic-strip adaptations of *Huckleberry Finn*; George Herriman's pre-Kat strip, *Baron Bean*; *Hairbreadth Harry* concludes; the art of Joseph Clement Coll.
- 18 *Li'l Abner's* Al Capp is featured, with his final interview, a hilarious speech, and the complete 1955 "Bald Iggle" sequence. Also, the graphic art of Winsor McCay, and *Sam's Strip*.
- 19 A classic episode of *Kerry Drake*, Andriola's detective strip; with *Big Chief Wahoo* in Hollywood; the political art of Frank King; and Penman of the Past Russell Patterson.
- 20 Gustave Verbeek's classic *Terrors of the Tiny Tads*; R.B. Fuller's adventurous *Oaky Doaks*; *Sam's Strip*; letters; and an special pictorial spread on strip promotion art. Cover by Alex Raymond.
- 21 A big helping of Jack Kent's classic *King Aroo*; a look at Percy Crosby's paintings of slum kids; and a complete '40s episode of Harold Gray's little-known Western series, *Little Joe*.
- 22 A special collection of features on Jimmy Swinnerton, including a portfolio of rare work; plus *Joe Palooka*, the cartoons of John Held, Jr., and political cartoonists and the labor disputes.
- 23 A complete episode of *Little Orphan Annie* from 1937; a look back at *Hi and Lois*; Fontaine Fox's assistant talks about working on *Toonerville Trolley*; and more great *Sam's Strip*.
- 24 A special all-Rube Goldberg issue, including a long article on his work, two first-person pieces by Rube, a complete checklist, portfolios of *Boob McNutt* Sunday pages and classic "Inventions."
- 25 Edwina interviewed, with an episode of her *Cap Stubbs* and *Tippie*; Gene Ahern's earliest work; Milton Caniff in adland; and John Wheeler's reminiscences of Bud Fisher, TAD, and others.

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A Forgotten Facet

The Cartoon Paintings Of Norman Rockwell

by Richard Marschall

What makes a cartoonist? More specifically, what constitutes a cartoon? The term derives from an Italian word indicating preliminary crayon sketches for a painting. Earlier, artists such as da Vinci executed caricatures. There is humor in cave paintings of the Cro-Magnons. On the other hand, cartoons don't always have to be humorous; they can be satiric, or as in the case of Goya's commentaries on war, outright sardonic.

We are accustomed to cartoons being in pen and ink, or sometimes in crayon on board. But it should really be content and not form that contributes to the designation; cartoons were once, and no longer, mainly reproduced in engravings and woodcuts. We can postulate that a cartoon should have an idea, whether representing a story, an episode or a momentary vignette; and there should be a point or a moral. Functionally, people should be depicted, and in some activity—to form the point, personalities must be involved, else the drawing would be a still life or landscape sketch. Another functional concern would seem to be the addition of words: most cartoons have captions or titles; the words help make the point, illuminate the personalities, and indeed provide counterpoint to—or even fulfill—the imagery.

Having established the loose definition of a cartoon, let us consider Norman Rockwell as a cartoonist. He worked in single images, mostly, and told stories. He usually painted rather than drew in ink, but virtually all of his work was captioned or titled. These factors, along with his two major preoccupations of humor and sentiment, actually made him a cartoonist in oils.

Rockwell is usually termed an illustrator—and he himself eschewed, embarrassed, the title of fine artist—but in fact very little of his output was story illustration. His work was primarily on covers and in advertisements. And in these outlets he composed single-panel, titled, vignettes. Toward the end of his remarkable career he varied his activities and went on reportorial assignments and painted portraits; but he also dabbled in what his art editor on *The Saturday Evening Post*, Ken Stuart, has aptly termed comic strips—multi-paneled stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. But very early in his career Norman Rockwell painted humorous and sentimental cartoons in oils for the very magazines whose art directors required those very things. He was in the heady company of such cartoonists/illustrators as Charles Dana Gibson, James Montgomery Flagg, Orson Lowell, A.B. Frost and others.

He was born Norman Perceval Rockwell in 1894 and spent some time living that middle name down. Although he was to immortalize rural America in his work he actually was a city kid, born in upper Manhattan; it's always the convert who becomes the zealot. Norman was a child prodigy as an artist, being a prize pupil of prominent teachers in his youth, designing Christmas cards at the age of 16, and illustrating his first book the next year. Before the age of 20 he was Art Director for a major illustrated monthly, *Boy's Life*.

His roommate was a cartoonist—Vic Forsythe, creator of the *Joe's Car* and *Joe Jinks* strips—when Norman made the biggest

sale of his young career in 1916 at the age of 22, to *Life* magazine. *Life* was the most prominent of the cartoon weeklies; *Puck*, the pioneer, was on its last legs (it was to expire in 1918), and *Judge* was popular but lightweight. *Judge* featured gags and jokes in its 32 weekly pages behind the illustrated covers, but *Life* was a thick hundred pages or more; was a social and political force; and was read by the Important. After entering the Charmed Circle at *Life*, however (with Gibson, Lowell, Anton Otto Fischer, Angus MacDonall, and R.M. Crosby), *Judge* was soon cracked by Rockwell, and so were many other magazines including, later in 1916, *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Through the early 1920s—the period when Rockwell painted most of his cartoon covers for *Life* and *Judge*—he worked for approximately 20 magazines and many advertisers. Despite his city-streets upbringing, Rockwell resembled one of the nervous, tentative, awkward country hicks he depicted so definitively in his artwork. It was with nervous steps each time that he approached the art editor at each new magazine. Roommate Clyde "Vic" Forsythe, employing a cartoonist's observation and verbalizing a caricatural urge, described Rockwell at the time of these nervous visits as having "the eyes of an angel and the neck of a chicken." At *Life* magazine, however, Rockwell doubtless received a fatherly welcome from the weekly's founder, John Ames Mitchell.

Nicknamed The General, Mitchell was anything but martial. Many artists—chiefly Charles Dana Gibson, whose career grew with *Life*'s—recorded the warm welcome and helpful advice they received from Mitchell. With twinkling eyes and genuine sympathy, he made newcomers feel as important as celebrities, and young artists glowed from their first, and subsequent, encounters, whether sales were made or not.

Not that there weren't tense moments. Rockwell, in his autobiography, described how he and other nervous freelancers would wait in the anteroom of the art department, very conscious that *Life* was second in importance only to the *Saturday Evening Post*.

"While we waited, each one of us would hold his portfolio between his legs or across his knees and rearrange the drawings in it. I always started out by putting my best ideas last, so that Mr. Mitchell would look all through the portfolio. . . . But when I sat down in the anteroom I'd get cold feet and figure that maybe Mr. Mitchell would get discouraged before he arrived at the good ideas and reject everything. So I'd put the good ideas first while I waited for my number to be called, taking great care that none of the other artists saw them. I didn't trust anyone (the feeling was mutual); the others might snatch my best ideas. I'd open my portfolio a crack and, reaching in, rearrange the drawings by bending them over each other or pulling one on its end and shuffling the others around it. All the other artists were doing the same. You can't ima-

gine the contortions we'd go through to conceal our drawings from each other. We must have looked like a side show at a circus, all of us sitting in a line along that bench, struggling with our drawings, and glancing suspiciously at each other."

There was a hierarchy to which Norman Rockwell did not belong, however.

"About ten o'clock every Tuesday morning the door of the anteroom would slam open and James Montgomery Flagg, the tycoon of illustration at that time, would hurry in. He'd go right past us into Mr. Mitchell's office without waiting for a number or even to be announced. We'd hear shouts of greeting as the door closed and there'd be silence for half an hour or so. Then he'd rush out, slamming the door again, and Miss Berry would begin to call our numbers. Flagg never said hello to any of us—he was too grand and mighty for that—just dashed in and out while we humble coolies looked on in silence and awe."

(Editor's note: It is possible that Rockwell, years later, confused the setting of these incidents, as Flagg was contracted to Judge during this period.)

Rockwell stated that the impetus toward his trademark themes of kids and dogs and nostalgia and humor also came from his cartoonist roomie. When he worked up his first *Post* submissions they were like painted versions of Charles Dana Gibson high-society cartoons, with which, like other magazines, the *Post* was filling its interiors. When Forsythe returned from a vacation and looked at the proud Rockwell's samples, he blanched.

"C-R-U-D, crud," he said on seeing them. "Terrible. Awful. Hopeless. You can't do a beautiful seductive woman. She looks like a tomboy who's been scrubbed with a rough washcloth and pinned into a new dress by her mother. Give it up. . . . Do what you're best at. Kids. Just adapt it to the *Post*. Hell, they don't want a warmed-over Gibson. . . . you're a terrible Gibson but a pretty good Rockwell."

Rockwell later wrote: "I didn't start the vogue for *Post* covers of kids. Clyde Forsythe did."

Back on *Life* and *Judge*, ironically, Norman Rockwell was not pigeonholed as a specialty artist, but rather drew all sorts of captioned and titled gags. There were kids and dogs, but also historical pieces, sentimental subjects, and humor, humor, humor, many of them with fairly awful puns.

When America intervened in the World War I, Norman Rockwell answered the call by enlisting in the Navy. Initially rejected for being 17 pounds underweight, Rockwell consumed enough bananas and doughnuts one afternoon to qualify—and then became a portrait-painter for vain Naval officers for the duration. During his period of defending the waves, however, he also freelanced to *Life*, *Judge*, and the *Post*. Soldiers ("Are we downhearted?" "NO!"), sailors, kilt-clad foreign officers, little Belgian girls, and old French mothers—these became the subjects of the patriotic artist, and his drawings were still captioned and titled, exclusively humorous or sentimental. While wartime themes might seem today like a sidetrack, Rockwell's fame actually increased: one *Life* cover doubled as the front of the Illustrated songsheet for George M. Cohan's *Over There*, certainly the War's theme song if there was one.

In the post-war years (not the *Post* war years) *Judge* increased its circulation markedly, and *Life* became even more sophisticated and smarter than it had been. It was the Roaring Twenties: women were emancipated, the college crowd held sway, Prohibition was the law universally flouted, speakeasies overflowed, jazz was the new music, and irreverence was the new religion. *Judge* served the Wild Set and *Life* chronicled the Smart Set (its new staff included Robert E. Sherwood and Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker, F.P.A., and Ring Lardner; and it served as the model upon which *The New Yorker* was founded.)

Maintaining its right to dissent from the spirit of the age was the *Saturday Evening Post*. It carried stories and illustrations aplenty of society parties, but the average reader was still the rural homebody and not the bathtub-gin flapper—and it is a mark of image vs. reality to note how massive the *Post*'s circulation was during the Roaring Twenties. Norman Rockwell increasingly made the *Post* his home, and increasingly it was a predictable home where kids and dogs populated the landscape. For *Life*, he continued to paint his cartoon covers into

1925, and there was a little more variation, with old salts and historical subjects appearing.

These homely preoccupations were a bit ironic because at this time Norman Rockwell himself—on his side of the easel—was living the spirit of the times. Having moved to New Rochelle, a suburb north of New York City where illustrators and literary types settled, he became part of party life where bacchanals continued through and past weekends, where moderation and abstinence in any forms—whether in regard to alcohol or marital fidelity—were scorned, and where the lifestyles F. Scott Fitzgerald recorded actually lived in style.

Eventually this lifestyle revolted Rockwell. It ruined his marriage, and he came to reject not only the scene but the setting: he moved from New Rochelle to the rural nurture of Arlington, Vermont. Faced with having to make a choice, Norman Rockwell returned not to his roots but to his soul. Left behind was also his work for *Life* and *Judge*. Perhaps the thematic preoccupations of the *Saturday Evening Post*, one wonders, became not so much a service to editors, publishers, and readers, but as welcome ballast in an innocent's life that had strayed and transgressed. He left *Life* and *Judge*, but continued to freelance beyond the *Post*; however, the accounts were squeaky-clean—the Boy Scouts, for instance, and carefully selected advertising accounts. Illustrator Howard Muncie has recalled bringing a lucrative beer account to Rockwell, only to have Rockwell gently but without an ounce of regret turn down the assignments because of their nature.

This Norman Rockwell of the mid-1920s to the early-1960s made his minor adjustments in sincerest manner possible: he was not cloaking himself in new or artificial themes, but rather shedding a few garments that were never comfortable in the first place. In so doing he went on to create his most memorable work, a testament of an America that maybe existed nowhere but in our hearts, a fact that made them no less real. Rockwell's later sentimental portraits are documents of America as valid, revealing, and authentic as those of Matthew Brady and of Cuurier & Ives. America didn't just look at Norman Rockwell's classic *Post* covers; it shared them.

For all his success, and well aware of the fame that was his, Norman Rockwell experimented once again with thematic shifts at the end of his career. In addition to 4th-of-July-picnic material, he came to record race riots in the South, Peace Corps volunteers in Africa, school children in the Soviet Union. But, interestingly, he experimented with form as well as subject—rather a more radical shift for an illustrator at least nominally committed to handling all sorts of subjects.

Rockwell developed, in his later *Post* years, what his Art Editor, Ken Stuart, called "comic strip" covers. The first was called "A Day's Outing," and was based on an idea provided by cartoonist Ted Key—creator of the *Hazel* feature—who ultimately was to sell many ideas to Rockwell. "A Day's Outing" was a before/after concept, showing an excited family driving off for holiday fun in the morning. . . . and, below the image, another representation of the family, riding on the opposite direction: elation has been replaced by weariness, anticipation by annoyance, fun by frazzle. Soon Rockwell was to paint other "comic strips," as well as longer sequences like the famous "Gossips," wherein a naughty piece of news is spread through a small town; only faces are delineated, their expressions holding the full joy of the piece. And, in a last bit of fun, Rockwell painted himself as the last face—the only one outraged by the gossip, he being the butt.

Ken Stuart—brilliant director and clever innovator at the *Post*, and as responsible as any individual artist for the institutionalization of the *Post*'s images and illustrations—considered these "comic strips" the apex of Rockwell's work. "We never had better reader reaction than when we ran one of the 'comic-strip' covers," he says. "And it was a great concept. Instead of one image, readers could keep the *Post* on their coffee tables a whole week and see something new in the cover every day."

It is interesting to speculate, especially since Rockwell returned to cartoon-oriented forms, about what course his work would have taken if he had remained with the *Judge/Life* style of painted cartoons rather than adopting the *Post* form of documentary images, even though they themselves were closely related to cartoon modes. In any event, the painted cartoons of Norman Rockwell in this portfolio provide a glimpse of a little-known facet in a varied and crowded career. And they remind us of how universal, not insular, the discipline of cartoon art actually can be.



All artwork from the collection of Rick Marshall

The Music Master.

THANKSGIVING

Life

NOVEMBER 17, 1921

PRICE 15 CENTS



A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Norman
Rockwell



Stolen Goods.



The Coward.



"Polley Voos Fransay?"



"Tain't You."



The Little Mother.



"Is He Coming?"



Two A.M.—Watch Your Step.



"If Mother Could Only See Me Now."



The Adopted Son.



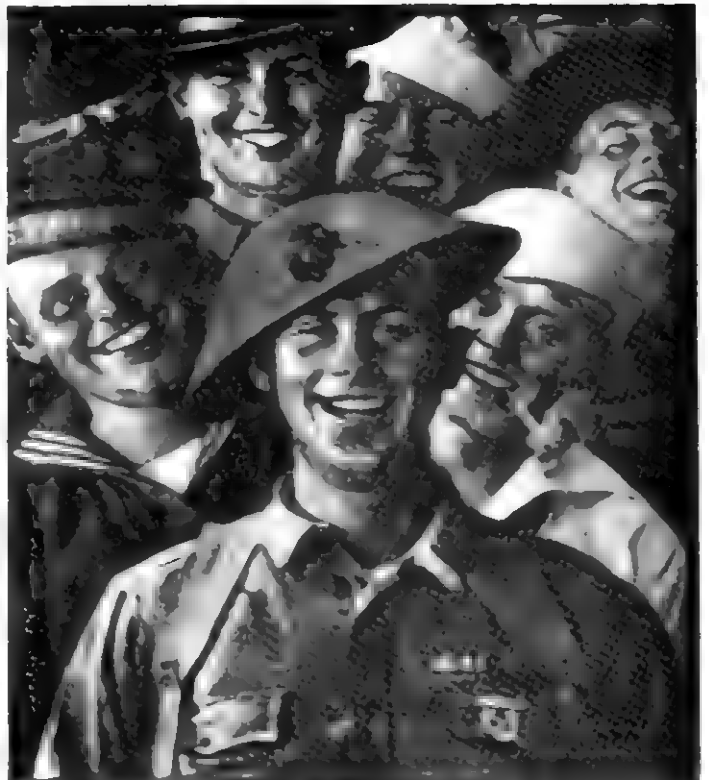
"A Light Haired Woman Will Cross Your Path."



Home Sweet Home.



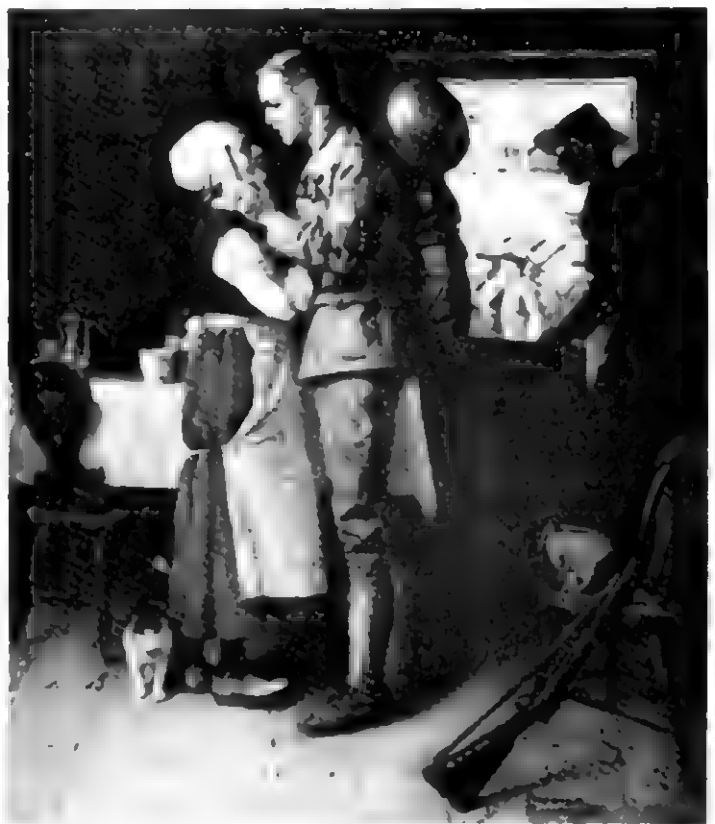
Good Scouts.



"Are We Downhearted?"



"Carrying On."



"Goodbye, Little French Mother."



"When, In The Course Of Human Events, It Becomes Necessary——"



My Mother.



"You Can Trust Me, Dad."



The Lord loveth A Cheerful Giver.



An American Missionary.



"So This Is Berlin!"



Over There.



A Tribute From France.

Fantasy in the COMICS

A Punk Mother Goose

Wells and Kaber's *Lovely Lilly*

The *New York Herald* was, as NEMO has mentioned in earlier installments of this series, the newspaper during comics' first decade that was most preoccupied with bizarre and fantasy strips. Carolyn Wells was a humorous writer and parodist of the first order; she also edited four essential volumes of American humor—*A Nonsense Anthology*, *A Satire Anthology*, *A Parody Anthology*, and *A Whimsy Anthology*. *Lovely Lilly* was the star of this newspaper feature that parodied a popular, saccharine children's bit of doggerel at the turn of the century. This beautifully drawn but macabre feature ran for less than two months in 1906-07 and stands as possibly the weirdest cartoon in American newspapers—a kind of punk Mother Goose before dementia became fashionable. —REM

ADVENTURES OF LOVELY LILLY by Carolyn Wells



Lovely Lilly, once in swimming, chanced to see a shark



Lilly thought to tease him would be quite a jolly lark.



Mad with anger, he pursues her, Lilly whisks about



And, lest he should bite her head off, pulls his teeth all out.

ADVENTURES OF Lovely Lilly

by CAROLYN WELLS

(COPYRIGHT 1907 BY THE
NEW YORK HERALD CO.)



Lovely Lilly met a monstrous Hippopotamus.



Lilly saw the horrid creature meant to make a fuss.



So she picked him up and shook him hard as hard could be.



With a careless gesture then she
tossed him up a tree

Adventures LOVELY LILLY

by CAROLYN WELLS

Drawings by G.F. KABER



Lovely Lilly out a walking saw a crocodile.



Lovely Lilly said 'Good morning' with a pleasant smile.



Nearer came the beast and nearer, wide he stretched his maw,



Lovely Lilly with a quiet wrench, broke the creatures jaw

ADVENTURES OF LOVELY LILLY

By CAROLYN WELLS
(COPYRIGHT 1917 BY THE NEW YORK HERALD CO.)
 DRAWINGS BY G.F. KABER



Lovely Lilly saw a Cobra, sleeping in the sun.



Lilly thought to tickle snakes would be a lot of fun.



So she teased him, till in anger, he prepared to spring.



Lilly picked him up and tied him in a knot, like string.

LOVELY LILLY ADVENTURES

by CAROLYN WELLS

DRAWINGS BY G.F. KABER

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Lovely Lilly met an angry Lion on a hill.



Lovely Lilly tweaked his mane, which made him madder still.



'With a growl the beast sprang at her.
Lilly didn't scold;



With her tiny foot she kicked him,
down the hill he rolled.

Adventures of LOVELY LILLY

by Carolyn Wells



Lovely Lilly met a tiger walking in the wood.



Angrily he snapped and snarled as any tiger would



By his throat she firmly grabbed him till he held his breath



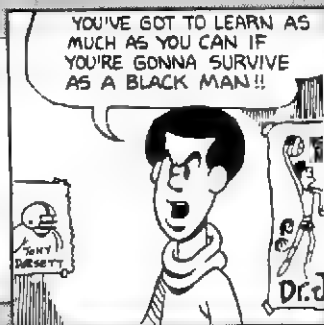
With her chubby hands she squeezed him
till he choked to death.

Ethnic Images in the Comics!

It may be one of cartoons' touchiest subjects, but it is also one of the most significant. Ethnic depictions—stereotypes, caricatures, sympathetic portrayals, minorities' self-images—both have formed a large portion of American cartoon history, and have mirrored American attitudes.

Those attitudes have been ugly at times and innocent at other times; the images have been rude and hilarious; the reflections have been of hardened prejudice and evolving tolerance. But they have been cartoons and comics, and, for a generation, been largely suppressed.

This important special issue of *NEMO: The Classic Comics Library* opens anew the history books and provides a cartoon look at where the art once dwelt, where America was and how far it has come. The issue's core is formed by essays and rare images from last year's landmark retrospective on the subject at Philadelphia's Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.



Special Focus—Five experts in the fields of cartoons and popular iconography examine the ethnic experience as depicted in cartoons and strips. These include looks at the broad field; Jewish cartoonists and characters; and Blacks. Stephen Jones, in particular, uncovers a wealth of information about the very active—though forgotten in mainstream circles—group of Black cartoonists and comic sections.

Portfolio—A rich gallery of ethnic and minority depictions in cartoons through the decades, from the immigrant period to days of assimilation. Many surprising images, with historical notes, focusing on Irish, Jews, and Blacks.



Classics—One of America's great ethnic humorists was cartoonist Milt Gross. This special issue of *NEMO* offers a portfolio of his hilarious Yiddish-dialect Sunday page *Mize Baby* from the Roaring Twenties.

Adventure—Perhaps the issue's biggest surprise is a forgotten masterpiece by a Black, female cartoonist about a Black, female heroine battling discrimination, racism, and even environmental polluters. *Torchy Brown* is a vintage strip that reads surprisingly modern and was syndicated in its prime to Black newspapers across America.



... all in the next issue of

NEMO

the classic comics library

The Chalk-Plate Cartoon And Its Production

by
**Thomas G.
Shonkweiler**

[Ed. Note: This is a 1913 article by an editorial cartoonist who employed the ancient chalk-plate method—the illustrations are in that technique—before “process,” or photo-engraving.]

I have been asked to tell something about the troubles of the artist who made newspaper cartoons by the method known as “chalk plate.” Not that I have any desire to pose as a chalk-plate expert. Far from it. In my humble opinion, there never was such a thing as an expert in chalk. When you think you have about arrived at the point where you know all there is to know about a chalk plate something happens to your work that never happened to it before—something that you had never dreamed could happen to it—and you find yourself beached once more upon the shoals of ignorance. The chalk plate simply defies expertness.

This noble art, once popular alike with both cartoonists and editors, has, of late years, been sadly neglected. So neglected, indeed, that it might be truthfully stated that the great majority of the young men now doing cartoons for the newspapers of the country know little or nothing of it. But this neglect has come about, not because of the impracticability of the system, but because of the march of progress in the making of printing plates. Within its peculiar limitations there is no better system of cut making on earth than the chalk plate. The trouble is that those limitations exclude almost everything the ambitious artist would like to put into his picture. So long as there was nothing better than “chalk,” so long as a choice lay only between the chalk plate and the old-time wood cut which was infinitely worse, the artists took to “chalk” like country swains to the village belle. But at the first appearance of the new



“The dust is one of the marvels of chalk work.”

photographic process with its freedom from dust and inconvenience they basely deserted the old love, exactly as those swains might have done, for a fairer face and form.

And that was the natural thing for them to do. “Process” as it is commonly called is far ahead of the chalk plate in possibilities and it is infinitely easier to make a creditable drawing on paper than through a coating of chalk sediment glued to a steel plate.

For to be exact you do not draw cartoons in chalk—you dig them. Not with a pick and shovel, of course, but dig, nevertheless, with an instrument that combines, in a considerably reduced form, the active features of both these useful implements of excavation. By courtesy or common consent, or both, this instrument is called a “graver.” Possibly this is because there is no graver moment in the artist’s working career than that in which he is called upon to employ this instrument in graving the features of some lately deceased prominent citizen for publication in the said citizen’s obituary.

The artist usually has a number of these gravers with points ground to various widths to give variety of line and value to his shadows. For example, if in drawing with a pen the artist wishes a light or heavy line he accomplishes it by simply regulating the pressure of the point upon the paper. In chalk, to arrive at the same result he changes gravers.

To the initiated this little description, meagre as it is, of the process of mining valuable pictorial gems from the unperceived depths of a chalk plate is entirely superfluous. It is for the benefit of those artists who have never worked in chalk and for that other class of readers who have never seen the actual work of cartoon making in any process that it has been thus considerably included. Perhaps even a little more might not be amiss if we are to arrive at a perfect understanding of the mystery.

The chalk-plate process—invented and named many years ago by Joseph Hoke whose descendants in St. Louis still have practically a monopoly of making the plates—is so called from the fact that the most essential part of the process is a polished steel plate upon which a composition of chalk has been firmly cemented. With his gravers the artist cuts his lines through this composition, making sure that each line goes clear through to the

"A bunch of these gravers."



"Pot and Kettle."

steel base. All the composition except that cut away by the artist in making the drawing remains upon the plate, forming a matrix from which the stereotyper makes a cast, which when routed and finished is turned over to the composing room to be made up in the regular newspaper forms.

Sounds perfectly simple—and it is. All you have to do is to be sure that the chalk is thick enough and all the lines in the right place. Nothing could be easier unless it is filling your lungs from the cloud of dust that rises like mists from the ocean when you blow away the loose composition in an effort to see what you are doing.

This dust is one of the marvels of chalk-plate work. There is nothing like it outside the interior of a cement plant. At every succeeding line the loosened particles rise like the mold from the plow and spread gently but surely over all the lines you have made before, and unless you keep blowing it away you will soon be able to see no more of your drawing than you could by trying to look at it through a board. And just as gently and surely when you blow it the dust that doesn't go down your throat floats out to cover everything in your room. It coats your desk and books and papers; it falls lightly on the radiator, the window casing and panels of the door; it hangs suspended from the cobwebs on the ceiling and with its magic touch transforms them into murky, swinging chandeliers until the breeze sweeping in through the open window sets it going again. In despair you call in the janitor once a month or so and chase it with mop and broom. But not for long, for almost before you are through priding yourself upon the snug appearance of your quarters it is back again and grinning at you from its old familiar haunts.

While the chalk plate has in most instances been superseded in the big city papers by the improved "process," it is, nevertheless, almost universally used by the papers in cities from thirty to a hundred thousand population. Quite a number of the men whose work appears with considerable regularity in *Cartoons Magazine* make their originals on chalk plate.

Quite naturally a good part of the work of the newspaper artist in cities of this class will be of a local nature. That is, he will be ex-



"You dig them out."

pected to attend all sorts of functions and make funny sketches of all sorts of people, and unless he is able to record their features with the utmost fidelity there is trouble ahead for both editor and artist. The average man does not know nor care how newspaper cuts are made, but he does know if his purported picture looks like him.

In doing sketch work for chalk-plate reproduction a good way is to make the original sketches the size they are to appear in the paper and trace the likeness upon the chalk. But even with this precaution the artist may consider himself lucky if he gets a good resemblance of his subject. Chalk plates at best are inconveniently thick and correct lines and proportions distressingly elusive. But let this not discourage the novice. "Practice makes perfect," and many of the best men in the business won their way to fame by mastering the chalk graver.

Along with its many disadvantages the chalk plate has some good points that must not be overlooked. Chief of these, and the one, perhaps, which appeals most to the publisher, is its economy. It costs considerably less to make cartoons by the chalk than by the process method. The salaries of several high-priced workmen are thereby saved.

Another good point in favor of chalk is its speed. Some may feel inclined to deny this, but the fact remains that in a very large percentage of cases the drawing may be prepared and cut finished ready for the forms in less than half the time required to do the same work by process. For this reason many publishers who ordinarily depend upon the zinc process keep also a chalk outfit for emergency. In this way an advertiser who comes in with a rush order can be supplied with a cut when otherwise his ad would be compelled to go over until next day or run without it.

Of course it is impossible to make as good drawings in chalk as with pen or pencil. All newspaper artists recognize this and universally prefer the process method. But for papers in cities of small size and for young artists trying for a foothold in their profession the chalk plate with all its drawbacks is a mighty good thing.



"Once a month or so you call in the janitor."

When the Problem was Too Much Money. . .

What a Difference A Century Makes

by Richard Marshall



THE OPENING OF THE CONGRESSIONAL SESSION.
TARIFF MONSTER.—Here I am again! What are you going to do with me?

"It is a condition, not a theory, that confronts us."

With that forthright statement President Grover Cleveland rent apart the political traditions and allegiances of a generation. He was talking about the tariff—taxes and duties upon foreign goods imported to the U.S. He devoted his entire State of the Union message for 1887 to the subject, and typical of Cleveland's unspectacular but earnest devotion to a cause, it remains the only presidential State of the Union message exclusively dealing with one topic.

Obviously Cleveland thought the issue important enough to disrupt the placid atmosphere of American politics. The tariff, he contended, had not only grown pernicious because of its

own anomalies (there were duties on some goods that weren't even produced in the United States), or for its harmful results (other nations retaliated against American exports), but also because it was collecting too much money. America had a massive surplus in its Treasury—\$79 million, massive by 1887 standards—and, Cleveland argued, the federal government could not justify keeping such money out of public circulation.

Those in favor of high tariffs could not argue that the duties were for revenue only, since revenues exceeded outlays. They held their position because they favored "protecting" infant American industries. Their arguments contended that the fragile American mining and manufacturing systems could not compete with robust, and often subsidized, systems like those in England; therefore protection was needed to make imports more expensive to consumers and, in turn, to assist struggling industries here. The problem with that argument by 1887 is that America was well into the Industrial Revolution, and many industries were no longer "infant," in need of paternalistic nurture. Indeed, some had grown to the extent that they could involve themselves in healthy export businesses themselves.

Nevertheless big business generally favored High Protection. Politically, before Cleveland's message there were no clear-cut party stands (in one view this translated to the fact that most politicians across the board were bought and owned by monopoly industrialists).

After Cleveland's message, however, he effectively committed his party, the Democrats, to low tariff policies or, in the accusations of the Protectionist Republicans, free trade. The election was fought on these rather arcane economic grounds, and for all of the partisan propaganda, and massive vote frauds, the campaign was probably the most issue-oriented of any presidential contest outside the Civil War years.

Cleveland lost the election in the electoral college—although he won a plurality of votes over Benjamin Harrison, the Republican nominee. The diminutive Harrison altered the Republicans' answer to the Treasury surplus (for years the solution had been "river and harbor legislation"—pork-barrel projects in legislators' home districts); he resurrected the Civil War as an issue and developed a scheme to shower pension money on Union veterans. By implication the Democrats were the party of Secession, and to make opposition even more difficult Harrison appointed Corporal James Tanner Director of Pensions; he was an amputee whose very visage evoked sympathy for untold and unseen millions of needy soldiers. During Harrison's term veterans' pension payments swelled to half of the Federal budget, and by the end of his four years (he was defeated in 1892 by Cleveland), the government was running on a deficit, even with continued high tariffs.

Such a wonderful problem as surplus money was portrayed as a problem indeed by Joseph Keppler, founder and chief cartoonist of *Puck* magazine on Dec. 7, 1887—before Cleveland's famous message—and the tail of the Surplus monster is clearly labeled "Tariff Question." *Puck* not only was partly responsible for Cleveland's election (see *NEMO* [9]), but its cartoons formed the conscience of the Administration. *Puck's* traditional tariff-reform stance merely presaged the conservative reform president.

During the campaign of 1888 *Puck* mightily helped raise the level of public debate. Keppler's cartoons and H.C. Bunner's editorials made the complicated issues of tariffs, *ad valorem* rates, and reciprocity intelligible to the average reader... and voter. Indeed the cartoons and editorials from *Puck* were reprinted in booklet form as educational aids in the election.

In his classic cartoon Keppler not only nominated another cartoon animal to the political lexicon (not as enduring as the donkey and elephant, but certainly available today as a symbol of the deficit), but portrayed the true reaction of politicians: fear and confusion. Remember, this appeared before the State of the Union message, and politicians were not yet forced from their ambiguous positions. Carlisle of Kentucky presides, and Randall runs scared in front of the tail (they were low-and-high-tariff Democrats, respectively). Among the Republicans is Thomas Brackett Reed, lower left, who in two years was elected Speaker of the House; he virtually encapsulated the feelings of monopoly industrialists in their triumph when he proudly presided over what he called the Billion-Dollar Congress—the first Congress to spend a billion dollars' worth of taxpayers' money.

Oh, for the good old days.



Collection of Rick Marshall

William Faulkner

by M. Thomas Inge

In assessing the work of a great writer of the Twentieth century like William Faulkner, it can be informative to examine the cultural context in which the author lived and worked. No writer works entirely in a vacuum, and a work of literature relates to and is influenced by the things the writer reads, sees, and experiences. Since this century has witnessed the complex development of a massive media environment and new forms of popular culture that reach people at all social and economic levels in all regions, it is necessary to examine not only the classics and so-called "high" culture of a writer's time but the popular and mass culture as well.

Of all the popular arts, the comic strip is considered the most inconsequential. Produced by a daily deadline, read quickly and thrown out with the trash, and considered primarily to be a childish amusement, this uniquely American derived art form has been accorded little appreciation, even though at present more than 100 million people follow the daily adventures of their favorite characters and, at certain points in the history of journalism, comic strips have spelled the financial success or failure of a newspaper. Some fine works of the imagination and visual artistry have appeared in the comics in the course of their development, but they have been lost to cultural history because of their impermanent format. There is evidence that William Faulkner—himself once an aspiring cartoonist—had a fondness for the funny papers and that this fondness is reflected in his fiction.

Through the tutoring of his mother, young William Faulkner learned to read the newspapers before he entered school, and the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* was among them. A major Southern daily since its beginning in 1839, the *Commercial Appeal* carried then a Sunday color comic section featuring such strips as *The Katzenjammer Kids* by Rudolph Dirks, *Happy Hooligan* by Frederick Burr Opper, *Little Jimmy* by James Swinnerton, *Buster Brown* by Richard Felton Outcault, *Foxy Grandpa* by "Bunny" (Carl Edward Schultze), and other favorites of the time. As daily comic strips became available (Bud Fisher's *Mutt and Jeff*, beginning on Nov. 15, 1907, was the first regularly published, successful daily comic strip), these were added to the columns of the daily issues of the *Commercial Appeal*. Another source of the comics could have been the Hearst *Chicago American*, which was advertised in the Oct. 30, 1902, issue of the *Oxford Eagle* as available through local newsdealers by subscription and containing on Sundays "A Humorous Weekly Printed in Colors." Most of America's favorite strips were available to Faulkner throughout his life, and his references to at least two specific titles in his fiction, as well as allusions to several others, demonstrate that he paid them some attention.

It is also important to note that as a child Faulkner



William Faulkner, *Ole Miss*, 1919-1920.

Reads The Comics

had an interest in drawing, which almost certainly would have led his eyes to the bright colorful pages of the funnies. He gave his first-grade teacher a water-color sketch and once spent his time during a sermon in the Baptist church drawing a carefully detailed train the hymnal, a subject which he repeated in his first-grade reader. His artistic abilities attracted the attention of his teachers, who would send him to the blackboard when an illustration was needed. He once astonished his mother when he had rushed home to tell about a new sprinkler wagon he had seen in the streets of Oxford, but unable to describe it in words, he produced a highly detailed drawing of the machine.

While he had always had his mind set on becoming a writer he also illustrated some of his own childhood stories and apparently entertained the idea of a professional career in art. When he was 14, he submitted an entry to a *St. Nicholas* magazine drawing contest, and he drew cartoons for classmates as well as for an eleventh grade yearbook that remained unpublished. After leaving school and on trips away from home, Faulkner wrote family and friends letters that often included drawings, and while he was in training with the RAF in Canada in 1918, his class notebook included precise renderings of the trainer planes and sketches of other cadets, officers, and scenes both real and imagined. In the 1920s he produced several illustrated, hand-lettered booklets including a 1920 set of poems called *The Lilacs*, the 1920 play *Marionettes*, and the 1926 chivalric allegory *Mayday* written for Helen Baird, a woman he was courting. During the time he spent in New York City in 1921, Faulkner planned to take some art classes and hoped to earn money from his art while perfecting his skills as a writer. Long after he gave up his artistic ambitions, he would entertain close friends and family with cartoons, caricatures, and sketches.

The only Faulkner drawings to see print during his lifetime, at least that we know about, were the 21 cartoons and sketches he produces primarily for local publication—14 for five editions of the University of Mississippi yearbook, *Ole Miss*, issued between 1917 and 1922; four for the University humor magazine *The Scream* in 1925; and three for the May 1925 issue of *The Double Dealer* in New Orleans. These are not the drawings of an amateur but rather those of an artist who knows how to control a line for maximum effect, to suggest in a few lines a more complex scene or idea, and to suggest through controlled caricature the humorous side of the people around him, swept up in the latest fashions, fads, and attitudes encouraged by the jazz age. These drawings are carefully balanced in design, make effective use of blacks and whites, and are restrained in style. Faulkner had full control of his pen and ink.

The artist who influenced Faulkner's work most pro-



William Faulkner, *Ole Miss*, 1919-1920.

foundly was Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98), whose sensually shocking illustrations in the 1890s came to symbolize the decadent movement in England. Beardsley is mentioned in at least three of Faulkner's novels—*Soldiers' Pay*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* In the most thorough analysis of this influence, Addison C. Bross suggested that Faulkner was attracted by Beardsley's "playful whimsy, his extravagant grotesqueness, his eternal suggestiveness—often erotic, often hinting at perversity, but always suave, always self-contained. A Beardsley drawing seems to hide, just beyond the observer's awareness, a sinister and abominably fascinating story.

In several of his *Ole Miss* drawings, particularly the border decoration for his poem "Nocturne" in the 1920-21 volume and the introductory illustration for the Social Activities section in the 1919-20 volume, the evidence of Beardsley's influence is fairly obvious, especially in the second where Faulkner appropriates the earlier artist's trademark—the candelabrum. It is in the fiction, however, rather than in the drawings that the full ethos of Beardsley was to have its effect, such as the hints of corruption, sensuality, and decadence or the use of the grotesque.

The other artist with whom Faulkner has been compared in his style was mentioned by Faulkner himself in a passage in *Mosquitoes*. Julius Kauffman is speaking, but the sarcasm about college students affecting the latest attitudes and aping the jazz age stereotypes was probably shared by the writer himself:

A few years ago a so-called commercial artist . . . named John Held began to caricature college life, cloistered and otherwise, in the magazines; ever since then college life, cloistered and otherwise, has been busy caricaturing John Held. [Mosquitoes, 1927]

John Held, Jr., was probably one of the most widely recognized cartoonists of the 1920s. His thin, flat-chested, unconventional women gave full visual form to what became known as the flappers; and his pseudosophisticated, booze-drinking, raccoon-coated

men gave new meaning to the Joe College caricature. Faulkner could have seen Held's work in *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, or any number of popular magazines of the period, or even his his Hearst syndicated newspaper comic strip feature *Oh! Margy!* If F. Scott Fitzgerald was the literary spokesman of the jazz age, Held was its illustrator, so it was a most appropriate collaboration when he did the drawings for Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age* in 1922. Hardly any artist since Held who has set out to portray the Roaring Twenties was able to escape his influence. Faulkner included Held's thin and nervous line, the angular attitudes of his figures, his ability to capture the energy of dance and music, and the inherent satire of his detached point of view—all of these are characteristic of Faulkner's cartoons as well.

In addition to Held, there are other popular cartoonists of the time who might easily have had an influence on Faulkner's style. One was George McManus, best known for his classic tale of the nouveau riche, *Bringing Up Father* (beginning in 1913). In which Maggie tried to rise above her origin as a washerwoman after winning the Irish sweepstakes while Jiggs continually slipped back into the former world of his cronies in Dinty Moore's tavern for a serving of corn beef and cabbage. McManus achieved a clean line in his comic strip panels with stylized fashions, art nouveau backgrounds, and neatly detailed architecture, directions in which Faulkner seemed to be working.

Another cartoonist of possible influence was Cliff Sterrett, whose *Polly and Her Pals* (beginning in 1912) began as a type of college humor strip focusing on Maw and Paw Perkins, their attractive daughter Polly, and the dozens of collegiate suitors who pursue her affections. Sterrett began to experiment with the visual potential of comic art and was soon incorporating in the 1920s striking patterns of abstraction much in the style of cubism and surrealism. Faulkner too demonstrated an interest in such nonrealistic patterns and a similar preference for design over characterization. Other cartoonists whose work bears artistic similarities with Faulkner's include Bud Fisher,

William Faulkner,
Ole Miss,
1919-1920.



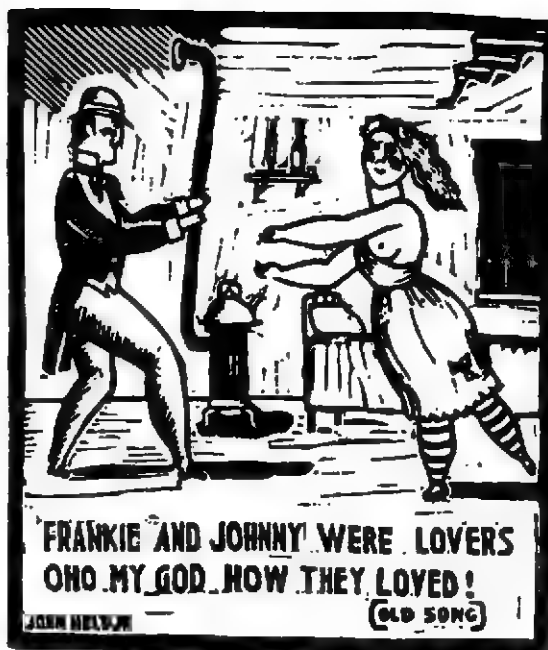
whose classic adventures of the comic team *Mutt and Jeff* became the longest running daily American comic strip, and Billy DeBeck, whose sportling life feature *Barney Google* (beginning in 1919) kept the nation involved in the picaresque adventures of this pint-sized hero.

Finally, however, it should be noted that none of these creative artists—Beardsley, Held, McManus, Sterrett, Fisher, or De Beck—is a direct source of imitation for Faulkner. The Mississippian may have observed and learned from them and others as well, but he was working in a vein that is distinctly his own. He was no copyist. His sense of design, his satirical point of view, his effective arrangement of blacks and symmetrical patterns, his ability to suggest with a few lines rather than include details—these might have matured into a comic style suitable for the humor magazines and funny papers of the time. If Faulkner was, as he described himself, a “failed poet,” one might say that before he was a “failed poet,” he was a “failed cartoonist.”

It is in his fiction that the influence of popular comic art was to linger. One can see it in the early unpublished short story of 1925 called “Frankie and Johnny.” Were it not for the fact that the chronology prohibits it, one might guess that Faulkner was inspired by the set of block prints called *The Saga of Frankie and Johnny* begun by a young John Held, Jr., in 1916 but not published until 1930. Faulkner’s version has recast and revised the American folk ballad in the form of a series of bold vignettes and rough prints much in the style of Held’s undefined woodcuts. The cast of characters has been expanded, the mother rather than Frankie is the prostitute, and the ending has been changed, or rather we are not witness to Johnny’s death, which is likely to follow upon the tragic events.

Faulkner invests the story with a certain degree of psychological subtlety by focusing upon Frankie’s relationship with her mother and Frankie’s plight as the archetypal wronged woman likely to follow in her mother’s footsteps. For the most part, however, the story is told through exaggerated caricature (such as the father who drowns saving the fat lady at the beach, a scene taken directly from hundreds of comic post card drawings of the period) and bittersweet comic detail (such as the prostitute mother whose sense of decency is offended by what people will think of her pregnant unwed daughter). The stereotypes of comic strip art—the domineering, strong-willed mother who never realizes the hypocrisy of her own actions, the dominated father who is all kind-hearted boast, the delicate heroine who can pack a mean punch in the style of Little Orphan Annie, and the posturing Johnny who sees himself as a bold Hairbreadth Harry who comes to Frankie’s rescue—these are set in the naturalistic context of a *Maggie* by Stephen Crane or *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser. In the contrast and melodramatic juxtaposition lies the brilliance of Faulkner’s story. Frankie says, “Oee, at times Johnny was worse than a movie,” and she might as easily have said, “Johnny was worse than the funny papers.”

Also noteworthy is Faulkner’s slightly stilted use of urban backstreet dialect and criminal slang, although such lines as “Beat it, Bum; or I’ll slam you for a row” and “Hilt me, baby, I like it” sound like dialogue from the later gangster films of the 1930s. Crane and Dreiser had made attempts at such language, but before Crane went public with *Maggie* in 1896 (an edition was printed privately in 1893), Richard Felton Outcault had already originated a form of urban slang in his comic feature begun on May 5, 1895, *Hogan’s Alley*, better known as *The Yellow Kid*, in which a street urchin spoke in crude language by way of words printed on his yellow nightshirt. The influence of the character was such that parents and guardians of propriety soon brought such pressure and notoriety to Outcault that he abandoned the feature in 1898 and created in 1902 the more proper *Buster Brown*, but *The Yellow Kid* lingered on into the new century in form of book reprints, magazines, advertisements,

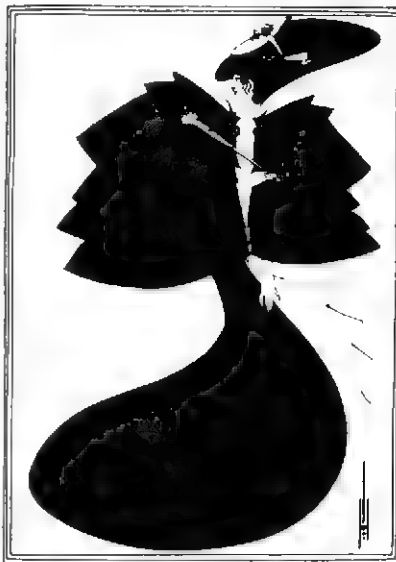


games, and toys, all of which Faulkner could have encountered as a child.

The one novel by Faulkner with a character whose name is most closely associated with comic strips is *Sanctuary*. Popeye Vitelli was, of course, partly modeled after the Memphis gangster Neal Karen Pumphrey, also known as “Popeye,” who had subjected a young woman to much the same treatment accorded Temple Drake in *Sanctuary*. Before then the adjective “popeyed,” meaning open-eyed with surprise, expectation, and wonder, had been around a long time, at least as far back as the early Nineteenth century in America (*A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles* by Mitford Mathews takes it back to 1824 in print), and Faulkner used it twice in application to the character Major Ayers in *Mosquitoes* in 1927 before there was a comic-strip Popeye. This, we cannot argue that the only source of the name could be the comic strip, although other evidence suggests a connection.

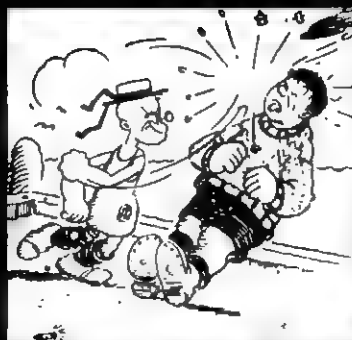
Faulkner’s Popeye first appeared in an unpublished short story written around the same time as *Sanctuary*. In “The Big Shot” he is described in the style of a stark comic-strip image: “a slight man with a dead face and dead black hair and eyes and a delicate

Aubrey Beardsley, illustration for Oscar Wilde’s *Salome*.





1. The infink Popeye.



2. The childhood slugger in action.



3. The sailor as a young rake.



4. The adult mariner in a characteristic pose.

hooked little nose and no chin, crouching snarling behind the neat blue automatic. He was a little dead-looking bird in a tight black suit like a vaudeville actor of twenty years ago, with a savage falsetto voice like a choir-boy." An identification with a comic-strip character even appears quite intentional here when two pages later Faulkner describes him as "a little, cold, still, quiet man that looked like he might have had ink in his veins." Indeed, all comic strip characters have nothing but ink in their veins.

Faulkner continued to use these stylized caricature-like descriptions of Popeye in the opening pages of *Sanctuary*:

He [Horace Benbow] saw, facing him across the spring, a man of under size, his hands in his coat pockets, a cigarette slanted from his chin. His suit was black, with a tight, high-waisted coat . . . His face had a queer, bloodless color, as though seen by electric light; against the sunny silence, in his slanted straw hat and his slightly akimbo arms, he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin. . . .

Across the spring Popeye appeared to contemplate him with two knobs of soft black rubber The cigarette wreathed its faint plume across Popeye's face, one side of his face squinted against the smoke like a mask carved into two simultaneous expressions. . . . His skin had a dead, dark pallor. His nose was faintly aquiline, and he had no chin at all. His face just went away, like the face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten. . . .

Popeye's eyes looked like rubber knobs, like they'd give to the touch and then recover with the whorled smudge of the thumb on them. . . . Ahead of him Popeye walked, his tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernistic lampstand.

The black knobby eyes and ghostly white skin, the distorted features, the figure he strikes when he stands or walks, like a piece of stamped tin or a modernistic lamp for the living room—all are reminders of a character in a black and white cartoon or comic strip. Popeye also demonstrates the strength of a comic strip superhero, as when he plucks Temple Drake from the ground:

His hand closed upon the back of her neck, his fingers like steel, yet cold and light as aluminum. She could hear the vertebrae grating faintly together. . . . Suddenly she felt herself lifted bodily aside, Popeye's small arms light and rigid as aluminum.

Usually this sort of thing can only happen in the fantasy world of the comics, and many a time the comic strip Popeye has been known to pick up a struggling Olive Oyl in just this manner.

Any recent reader who has picked up *Sanctuary*, which appeared in print on Feb. 9, 1931, has found it necessary to go through a process of disassociation as it become evident that Faulkner's Popeye seems to have nothing to do with the beloved Popeye of comic strip and animated film fame. The selection of that name could have been a little joke at the expense of the reader, just another amusing perversity from an author who delights sometimes in affronting his readers. It was not until 1971 that a critic even dared to note the relation between the two figures, this in a footnote to an essay on the mythological sources of *Sanctuary* by Thomas L. McHaney, who noted "Elsie C. Segar's popular comic strip, *Thimble Theatre*, had introduced the now-famous Popeye on Jan. 17, 1929, and within a few weeks he had attained great popularity. The sailor replaced Ham Gravy as Olive Oyl's Perpetual suitor The comic dialogue between Popeye's grandmother and the chauffeur [in chapter 31] clearly resembles the humor of Segar's strip."

Then in 1973 in a brief article, the first to address the matter of Faulkner's use of the comic strips, Pat M. Esslinger expanded on the connection McHaney had made:

*Popeye may be the symbol of evil and the Pluto figure who sweeps Judge Drake's teasing daughter into the recessed Hades of Miss Reba's place, but he might also be the Popeye of E.C. Segar's comic strip. In the much disputed last chapter of *Sanctuary*, which was inserted only in the revised version of the novel, Faulkner carefully includes his clue to the joke. He prepares a long, elaborate, and seemingly irrelevant passage on how the child Popeye, who can't walk or talk and who has a great similarity to the crawling baby Sweet-pea of the comic strip, was raised on olive oil. The baby's eggs had to be cooked in it, and the incident of the broken bottle of olive oil led to the house burning which left Popeye impotent. It is this association of Faulkner's Popeye with olive oil that leads the reader to Segar's *Thimble Theatre* and the parallels between the comic strip and the *Sanctuary* Popeye. The obvious parallels occur in both characters' diminutive stature, the ubiquitous dangling cigarette that replaces the corn-cob pipe, the one knobby eye of each closed against the cigarette smoke, and the impotency, or in the comic strip counterpart, the weakness, which can be overcome only by an outside force such as a corn-cob or a magical dose of spinach. *Sanctuary's* Popeye is seen in an omnipresent, black, skin-tight suit, black rather than the white the comic strip character wore, but its sailor overtones are established when Temple asks, "What river did you fall in and with that*

Richard Felton
Outcault, *The
Yellow Kid*.



sult on?" The black suit and the constant reference to Popeye as "That black man" also merge the little gangster with the black man of the comic strip, Bluto, the black evil or Pluto force who always carries off the fair maiden Persephone figure, Olive Oyl. And the short little Memphis bootlegger may have, as the opening page of the novel indicates, "that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin," but he also has that pale flatness of a cartoon snipped from the Sunday funnies.

Two corrections are in order here. Faulkner could not have intended any association between his infant Popeye and Sweet pea since that infant character did not appear in Segar's comic strip until July 28, 1933, nor could he have intended any reference to Popeye's nemesis Bluto, later known as Brutus, since he appeared in a comic strip sequence beginning in June of 1933 and thereafter appeared primarily in the animated films first distributed that same year. Both Sweet pea and Bluto, then, came into being over two years after the publication of *Sanctuary*. It should also be noted that the Popeye Faulkner may have seen in the funny papers did not yet derive his strength from spinach but rather from having stroked the three hairs on the head of the magical "whiffle hen." His corn-cob pipe was never a source of his superhero strength, and only for the first four weeks of his existence did he wear an all-white sailor suit, to be replaced by the blue pants and black jersey with red collar, an outfit he has worn for over fifty-five years. It is interesting to note that in a 1933 promotional piece in which Segar traced the early years of Popeye, he is shown as a young man in one drawing, "The Sailor as a Young Rake," dressed in just the sort of tight black suit Faulkner's Popeye wore.

I do not mean to question the possibility that Faulkner may have recalled Segar's comic strip sailor when he named his character, only these inaccurate details. Popeye became famous immediately after his creation, and *Thimble Theatre* soon became the most widely circulated comic strip in the United States, making some knowledge on Faulkner's part almost unavoidable. What the errors do suggest is the cavalier attitude scholars take when they choose to discuss comic art. They tend to bank on vague memories; assume that comic strips do not develop, change, and add characters during the course of their

histories; and avoid the truly hard labor of going through newspaper collections on microfilm or locating reprints to check the accuracy of their impressions and assumptions.

Faulkner's mention of Olive Oyl does remain a strong clue that he had Segar's character partly in mind, but there are other ways in which the worlds of *Thimble Theatre* and *Sanctuary* are alike—through the presence of violence, an atmosphere of terror, and graveyard humor. These are elements lost to the contemporary reader because those who produced the Popeye comic strip after Segar's early death on October 13, 1938, moved into more innocent story lines, and reshaped the character into a less complex figure more compatible with the interests of younger readers. Segar's *Thimble Theatre* was a comic strip largely adult in content and orientation.

Thimble Theatre had been in progress for almost a decade before Popeye came on the scene. Designed partly as competition for Ed Wheelan's popular feature satirizing the film world, *Midget Movies* and later *Minute Movies*, *Thimble Theatre* intentionally had a changing cast of characters but primarily featured a nondescript comic hero named Ham Gravy, his gangly but ultra-feminine girlfriend Olive Oyl, her contentious and bad-tempered brother Castor Oyl, and their parents, Cole and Nana Oyl. Beginning as a very simply drawn gag-a-day feature satirizing stage melodrama, Segar began to develop continuity and interplay among his characters and moved the feature into the direction of fantasy and adventure. Through imaginative and narrative skill, and an adept hand at creating mystery and suspense, Segar was taking the comic strip in new directions of storytelling power and adult interest.

The tone and tenor of Segar's distinctive approach to comic strip narrative is evident in the preceding 18 weeks of the story in which Popeye was to make his first appearance. On Sept. 10, 1928, Castor and Olive's Uncle Lubry Kent Oyl returns from Africa with a rare and magical creature called the whiffle hen, which he has named Bernice. When challenged by Uncle Lubry to kill Bernice for a \$1,000 prize, Castor engages in twenty-six straight days of unsuccessful efforts to murder the fowl by every conceivable method of mayhem—guns, axes, poison, cannons, drowning, hanging, starvation, dynamite, electricity, gas, feeding it to a shark, and sending after her a murderous bird called the arrow hawk intent on impaling her brain. Despite this violence, Bernice becomes fond of Castor and becomes his constant but annoying companion.

Unaware that rubbing the three hairs on the head of the whiffle hen brings consistent good luck, Castor is soon beset by enormous offers of money to purchase the hen from strange men, as well as a woman fully draped in black sent by the criminal kingpin Mr. Mr. Fadewell. The competition for possession becomes so keen that Castor is subjected to several murderous threats, is finally knocked out, and is buried alive in a state of delirium. He survives, however, to witness the probable deaths of his would-be assassins. This is very unusual and strong fare for comic strips but representative of the kind of intriguing and powerful narratives created by Segar. The comic distance, the dark humor, and the obvious fantasy keep the horror in perspective and allow the reader to view the story as one would a gothic tale or detective yarn, specifically designed to play upon our delight in being playfully frightened.

Castor decides to sail for Dice Island, the largest gambling resort in the world and owned by Fadewell, to break the bank with the luck the whiffle hen will bring. When he, with Olive and Ham Gravy, go to buy a boat, it is at this point that they go in search of a sailor to manage the vessel and find Popeye, as ugly and unlikely a figure to become an internationally admired hero as one can imagine. He is completely aloof and independent, speaks his own mind (although in a bizarre and ungrammatical dialect), and has a temper that cannot be controlled. It was probably his incorrigibility that made him so attractive to funny

Bluto: Big, bad, and brutal.



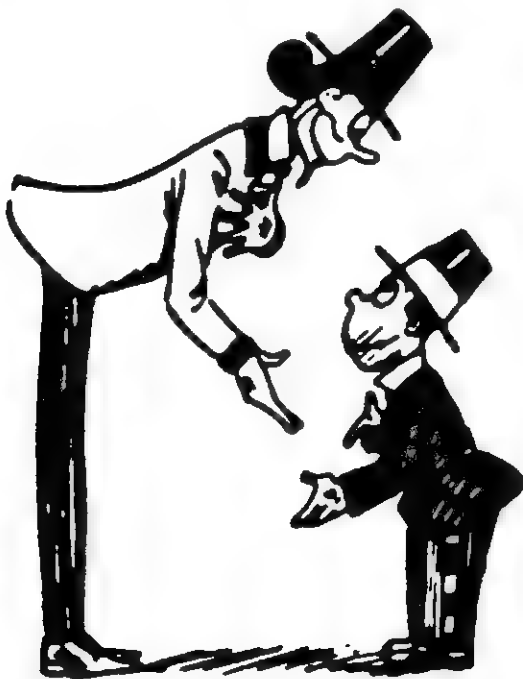
paper readers at a time when most comic pages were still dominated by naughty children, whimsical animals, domestic comedy, and melodrama.

Popeye's penchant for extreme violence was demonstrated 10 weeks after his appearance when he socks a deceitful character named Snork simply because he does not like his looks. His special powers for survival, which antedate those of Superman by nine years, are demonstrated when the unarmed Popeye is attacked by Snork with a gun. Although riddled with bullets, Popeye still stands, and the incredulous Snork exclaims, "Why don't you drop? I've shot you a dozen times—are you a demon?!" He finally collapses and crawls off into the dark of the ship's hold where he survives apparently by rubbing the head of the whiffle hen. After a long night of recuperation, he finally emerges from hiding for one more crack at Snork's jaw and finds the criminal brutalizing Olive Oyl. When Popeye downs Snork for the final time, his bravery elicits Olive's admiration who muses, "He's a man all right! If he wasn't such a funny lookin' thing, I'd give him a kiss." This is the first sign of a romance which will push Ham Gravy out of Olive's life and *Thimble Theatre* altogether. Five months later, on Nov. 11, 1929, to be exact, Segar would come across the phrase that would best epitomize his creation's integrity, self-knowledge, and independence of mind. When an exasperated Castor Oyl asks, "Fighting! Always fighting! What kind of an egg are you anyway?" Popeye replies, "I yam what I yam and that's what I yam." This would remain Popeye's sole creed (later modified to read "I yam what I yam, an' tha's all I yam"), an aid in times of distress, as Temple Drake would discover when cringing in fear in the corncrib as she later reported it to Horace Benbow: "So I'd hold my eyes tight shut and say Now I am. I am now."

As Bill Blackbeard has summarized his nature,

Segar's Popeye is a character compounded of vulgarity and compassion, raw aggression, and protective gentleness, violent waterfront humor and genuine "sensibility," thickheaded stubbornness and imaginative leadership, brutal enmity and warm friendship, who can knock out a "horsk" in rage and nurse a baby carefully while it is suffering a fever that makes thermometers pop. He is no paranoid daydream, but a realistic, complex, often wrong but determined man of action who suffers continual agonies of

Frederick Burr Opper, Alphonse and Gaston.



The quintessential Popeye.

decision, who pursues what he believes to be right far beyond the bounds of cop-interpreted law and order, who has to fight his very way to comprehensibility through the warp and woof of an English language that is often almost too much for him. . .

Popeye—human, smelly, capable of disastrous mistakes, able to slug a woman, pursue likely looking chicks with lusty interest, swear a blue streak when "irritated," able to be cheerfully cynical about almost everything dear to the proper, from patriotism to making money, and with a capacity to look as sloppy as he behaved—was certainly more of an anti superhero than anything else. Yet it was his jaunty character and behavior that wowed the public and made them turn to Thimble Theatre first among the comics for a full decade.

These comments, of course, simply go to show that the Popeye of the funny papers was a complex, multifaceted character with more of the bizarre and antisocial in his nature than most people today are likely to know about. It is in this context, therefore, that Faulkner's use of the name becomes most appropriate. His mean-spirited, pugnacious, violence-prone, independent, and aggressive Popeye has none of his namesake's redeeming qualities but all of his terrifying features turned to purely criminal purposes. Women find both attractive, perhaps because they are rebels and outsiders, and both live life on their own terms. Popeye Vitelli, however, places himself beyond any human sympathy by a cold and immoral cruelty. But the associations that Segar's comic strip world of violent humor would have for the reader of 1931 would serve as effective preparation for entering the evil world of *Sanctuary*. It might also be noted that both Faulkner and Segar created complete fictional communities populated by recurring and often family-related characters, took liberties with the English language in the name of stretching its creative potential (Segar contributed two new words to English—*goon* and *jeep*), and successfully combined the tragic and the comic in revealing parables of life that reflect on the complexities of human conflict and existence.

The other major character in Faulkner's fiction besides Popeye who bears a name famous in comic strip history is Jiggs, the mechanic who is a part of the Shumann expanded family in *Pyton*. In appear-



Jiggs of George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*.

ance he bears a strong resemblance to the Jiggs of George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*. We are told that he had a "hard tough shortchinned face" with a "bald spot neat as a tonsure" on top of his head, has a "short thick musclebound body," wears skintight pants "enclosing a pair of short stocky thick legs," and walks fast with a "short bouncing curiously stiffkneed gait." Also like the browbeaten Jiggs, dominated by his wife Maggie, so too does Faulkner's Jiggs have a henpecked background. He tells the bus driver in chapter one how he ran out on his wife in Kansas because she would grab the money he earned before he had a chance to tell his employer the job was finished.

Here the similarities end, but as the narrative develops, Faulkner surrounds Jiggs with other types of comic references, particularly to animated films and vaudeville or stage comedy. When he puts his hand into his pocket for the money with which to make a down payment on the books he wishes to purchase, the clerks "could follow it, fingernail and knuckle, the entire length of the pocket like watching the ostrich in the movie cartoon swallow the alarm clock," and Jiggs is also described as a "cartoon comedy centaur." When he boards the bus in the beginning, he soon finds himself involved in a scene resembling "that comic stage one where the entire army enters one taxicab and drives away." When Jiggs meets with the unnamed reporter, Faulkner says,

As they stood side by side and looked at one another they resembled the tall and the short man of the orthodox and unfailing comic team—the one looking like a cadaver out of a medical school vat and dressed for the moment in garments out of a flood refugee warehouse, the other filling his clothing without any fraction of surplus cloth which might be pinched between two fingers, with that trim vicious economy of wrestler's tights.

Another apt comparison, of course, would have been the classic tall-and-short team of the comics, Mutt and Jeff, themselves based on duos of stage tradition to which Faulkner refers.

The word most frequently associated with Jiggs, aside from the comic-strip practice of reducing the affirmative "yes" to an irritatingly repetitive corruption "yair," is the verb "bounce." Everything he does and everywhere he goes is with a bounce. Possessed

by the boots on which he bounces, Jiggs becomes the comically singular character whose devotion to an object or action warps him into an exaggerated stereotype. This is a standard source of humor in the comic strip and stage comedy.

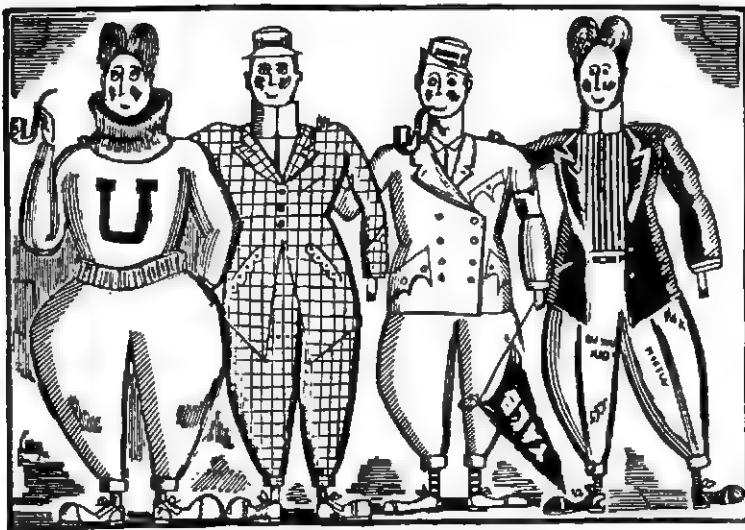
What Faulkner seems to be about here is using various references from comic strips, animated films, and vaudeville or the stage to invest Jiggs with his dramatic role as a comic chorus or witness to the tragic events of the novel. Finally the reporter begins to laugh at the absurd actions of the characters, including his own, and tells Jiggs that what started out to be a "good orthodox Italian tragedy" has now "turned into a comedy." The reporter has achieved a cynical distance on the extreme behavior and exaggerated actions of the characters, a perspective they all lack, but like them he proves unable to resist following out the fated impulses that possess them even into the jaws of death. The forlorn central figures of the novel at one point are described as forming "a tableau reminiscent . . . of the cartoon pictures of city anarchists."

Given that one of the major settings of the novel is the world of journalism and the newspaper, references to comic strips are not surprising, but one wonders whether or not the thoughts of the reporter were shared by Faulkner when he describes the newspaper as a "fragile web of ink, and paper, assertive, proclamative; profound and irrevocable if only in the sense of being profoundly and irrevocably unimportant. . . the dead instant's fruit of forty tons of machinery and an entire nation's antic delusion." Of his work, the reporter says, "We got to eat, and the rest of them have got to read. And if they ever abolish fornication and blood, where in the hell will we all be?" These are not positive views of what was then the most influential of the nation's mass media.

Given the other major physical setting, the airport where the airmeet takes place, it is surprising not to find any references to the several popular aviation or adventure-with-airplanes comic strips of the period: *Tallspin Tommy* by Hal Forrest and Glen Chaffin (beginning in 1928), so popular that it became the first adventure comic strip to be adapted as a weekly movie serial (released in 1934); Lyman Young's *Tim Tyler's Luck* (1928); *Scorchy Smith* by John Terry (1930), but rendered brilliantly after 1933 by Noel Sickles; Roy Crane's *Captain Easy* (1933), which grew out of the earlier *Wash Tubbs* (1924); and Zack Mose-

Rudolph Dirks, *The Katzenjammer Kids*.





Through the Dim Haze of Memory Comes
CLASSY KUT COLLEGE KLOTHES
ENGRAVED BY JOHN HELD JR. AN OLD ALUMNUS

Period parody by the popular John Held, Jr.

ly's *Smilin' Jack* (1933). All of these adventure strips dwelt lovingly on the romance of flying and often the minute details of aircraft construction, realistic detail being the standard for the latter. They dealt with air-meets, barnstorming, and death-defying feats of the sort depicted in *Pylon*. But Faulkner chose not to draw on any of these popular figures or their images, unless we are to find in Laverne and her erotic stunt in the airplane with Shumann, with her skirts flapping in the breeze, some suggestion of the curvaceously rendered women of *Smilin' Jack* called by the artist "de-icers."

As best I have been able to determine, only two comic strips are specifically mentioned by Faulkner's fiction, one by name and the other by description, both in *Light in August*. Hines's appearance in the courthouse in Mottstown is reminiscent, we are told, of a scene out of "the Katzenjammer Kids in the funny paper"; and at the conclusion, when Byron Bunch and the traveling furniture repairer who tells the story to his wife compete for the position of who will sleep on the ground, "It was like those two fellows

William Faulkner, *Ole Miss*, 1919-1920.



CLASSES

that used to be in the funny papers, those two Frenchmen that were always bowing and scraping at the other one to go first." The last reference is to *Alphonse and Gaston* by Frederick Burr Oppen, who also drew *Happy Hooligan* and *Maud the Mule*. Alphonse and Gaston are extremely polite Frenchmen who have carried good manners to such an extreme that they are both immobilized and unable to act as disaster occurs around them: "You first, my dear Alphonse!" "No, no—you first, my dear Gaston!" They reside more in the popular consciousness and language as representatives of excessive politeness than as comic-strip characters. In both cases in *Light in August*, Faulkner seems merely to be using the two comic strips as idiomatic references since they have no integral relationship to the plot or action.

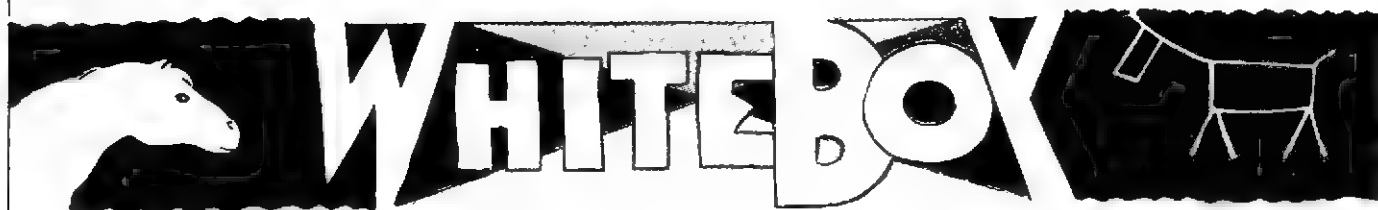
Of course, some of the children in Faulkner's fiction conduct themselves after the fashion of the eternally troublesome pranksters Hans and Fritz in the Rudolph Dirks' comic strip *Katzenjammer Kids*, which began in 1897. For example, the activities of young Malcolm and James Faulkner in setting the pasture afire in the 1937 comic sketch "Afternoon of a Cow" are not unlike the typical mischief of the *Katzenjammer Kids*, except for the addition of the cook's son, Grover, who is equally culpable. The comic strip was based on the German verse tales of Wilhelm Busch, *Max und Moritz* (1865), and interestingly enough in the original tales, the young hell-raisers burn the schoolmaster by putting gunpowder in his pipe and are themselves burned when they fall into dough and are cooked in the baker's oven. There is no evidence, however, that Faulkner knew the work of Wilhelm Busch, although translations of the grim moral fables were available.

Besides Popeye and Jiggs, there are several characters whose names could conceivably have been inspired by comic strips of the time: Hawkshaw the barber of the stories "Hair" and "Dry September" after Gus Mager's *Hawkshaw the Detective* (beginning in 1913); the reporter Smitty in *Pylon* after Walter Berndt's office boy strip *Smitty* (1922); the squatter Wash Jones of *Absalom, Absalom!* and the Jefferson jailer Euphus Tubbs of several novels after Roy Crane's comic adventurer *Wash Tubbs* (1924); the treacherous horse trader and father of Flem, Abner Snopes, after Al Capp's hillbilly strip *Li'l Abner* (1934); and the mentally deficient criminal known as Monk in the story of that name in *Knight's Gambit* after Gus Mager's *Monk* series of comic strips (beginning in 1904) featuring apelike humans performing wacky deeds (such as *Knocko the Monk*, *Groucho the Monk*, or *Sherlocko the Monk*—which served to inspire the names of the Marx Brothers in 1918). But these are mere borrowings or simply incidental uses of the same names. Occasionally Faulkner picks up a word originated in the comics, such as "twenty-three skidoo," repeated several times in *The Reivers* by Carle's nephew Otis and the deputy Butch Lovemaiden, a coinage by the popular cartoonist Tad Dorgan, who died in 1929.

This examination of Faulkner's fiction for comic strip references suggests that he looked to the funnies as a source of names for some of his characters, but rather than appropriate them in any direct way, he used the contexts of their associations in indirect ways to reflect on the situations and natures of the figures to whom they are applied. Faulkner read the funny papers, but perhaps a little more deeply and seriously than most people would suspect. But then this was the man who wanted, when he first went to Hollywood in 1932, to write film scripts for Mickey Mouse cartoons. My guess is that he was not thinking about the mild-mannered Mickey of the Disney films but rather the courageous, hell-raising adventures of Mickey as depicted in the breathtaking adventure comic strip version that master artist-writer Floyd Gottfredson produced from 1930 to 1932, and continued to script exclusively for decades.

When William Faulkner read the funny papers, he laughed, but more wisely and appreciatively than most critics might imagine.

The Haunting Beauty of



By Michael Barson

Nineteen thirty-three was quite a year for newspaper comics. The roll call of features that made their debuts includes such classics as Roy Crane's *Captain Easy*, V.T. Hamlin's *Alley Oop*, and Zack Mosely's *On the Wing* (soon to be known as *Smilin' Jack*). Perhaps only 1934, with its illustrious new faces—including *Terry and the Pirates*, *Flash Gordon*, and *Mandrake the Magician*—could lay claim to fielding a superior lineup.

In the midst of this period of unparalleled creativity, a Sunday feature was introduced that was unlike anything else seen up to that time—or since. Surviving for barely two years and making relatively little impact in terms of national popularity, Garrett Price's *White Boy* nonetheless had the distinction of being, with George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, the most boldly designed and graphically inventive newspaper comic of the time.

Already a successful cartoonist in the pages of the *New Yorker* magazine when he began drawing *White Boy* for the New York News-Chicago Tribune syndicate in 1933, Price must have been excited by the possibilities of working in color. From the first, *White Boy* fairly explodes off the page with vitality. Drawn with deceptive simplicity, *White Boy* has the appearance of a children's feature, with large areas of unadulterated color and stories that were neither complicated, suspenseful, nor developed in depth (three or four weeks was the most an episode generally was accorded). Still, there's something about *White Boy* when viewed through the eyes of a 1980s reader that lends

it considerable charm. Like the best-loved children's literature, *White Boy* was done well enough to be appreciated by an adult audience in addition to its primary audience of children. Not that this strip was *The Wind in the Willows* of Sunday comics. *White Boy* is, at best, a minor classic, with the emphasis on "minor." Even so, our attention is warranted. Modest in its ambitions, *White Boy* succeeded in portraying selected customs and rituals of the American Indian for the first time in comics.

The premise of *White Boy* is as simple as its stories. A boy of about 12 years is adopted by a hefty Indian woman named Broken Wing after presumably being orphaned (the obscurity of the initial episode confounds confirming the circumstances of the boy's solitariness). Dubbed *White Boy* by the unnamed tribe—although they are foes of "the hostile Sioux"—the boy becomes fast friends with Broken Wing's natural son, the rotund Woodchuck. The other principal character is the beautiful Starlight, a maiden of *White Boy*'s age whom Price drew with special grace.

One of the first "adventures" (the term is used loosely) revolves around *White Boy*'s efforts to regain his horse, Bunny(I), from the Sioux, suggesting also that the Sioux might have had something to do with the orphaning of *White Boy*. A white trader named Dan Brown—coonskin-capped and as sneaky, in a benign way, as a raccoon—informs *White Boy* about Bunny, seemingly with an ulterior motive of planning to separate *White Boy* from the tribe. . . a subplot that is dropped as fast as it is introduced. After some shenanigans involving a skunk, a raid on the Sioux for horses is arranged. "The Rainbow Braves"—it's never made clear whether this is the name of a band of warriors within the tribe, or the tribe itself—conducts the raid, which is a success. But, although Bunny is one of the "liberated" horses, he is not returned to *White Boy*, because by custom the brave who stole him back can then assume ownership. While all this is being worked out, *White Boy* adopts another kind of pet, an orphan bear cub named Whimper.

As the storyline in *White Boy* began to develop, Price spent less time designing elaborate logos, which for the first couple of months had cleverly incorporated aspects of Indian symbols and patterns with the strip's title. The logo became smaller and simpler, although occasionally Price would draw one very elaborate. It's a pity that he couldn't devote the additional time to this important element of page design, particularly with the strip's interest in presenting authentic Indian rituals and customs. The logo was similar to that of Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, even in its simplified format of the mid '30s and '40s.

One *White Boy* page demonstrated over several panels how English could be translated into sign language, one of several instances of Price donning his instructor's cap for at least a portion of the strip, and demonstrating that he'd done a fair bit of research into Indian mores and language.

The problem with Bunny, the displaced horse, was resolved when *White Boy* wins a race against Badger Claw, Bunny's new owner, using a horse lent to him by Dan Brown. (Whether Brown is a good or bad character is never cleared up; in one episode, he's shown conning the Indians into accepting trinkets for valuable hides, but on the whole he could hardly be described as an evil white man.)

A genuine surprise occurred in the *White Boy* storyline in the summer of 1934. The tribe decides to pull up stakes and move to "the fabled land of underground giants"—the Yellowstone area—in search of better game. The strip for July 8 illustrated the legend of the Yellowstone geysers in terms of Indian mythology, and two weeks later the tribe encounters the great Salt Lake—and another, hostile tribe of "little men" who capture Woodchuck. As *White Boy* and Starlight search for Woodchuck in the ensuing weeks, Price interrupts the potential suspense by offering a number of nature lessons. One week it was a series of portraits of the wildlife of the region (including the grizzly and the black bear), while another week the rivalry between the fisher-hawk and the eagle was explored. These vignettes were charming and informative, but one wonders if interest in the storyline didn't suffer because of these side-trips.

The search for Woodchuck does ultimately result in the first sustained adventure in *White Boy*'s brief history. A strange white woman, dressed in Japanese kimono and finery, rescues *White Boy*, who's been adrift on a lake. Woodchuck manages an escape and reunites himself with *White Boy*, but Starlight is taken captive and given an audience with "The Queen," a Jean Harlow-type of white woman with flowing platinum tresses. She seems to suffer from delusions of grandeur, and is surrounded by a pack of loyal bobcats. The Queen orders Starlight to marry a despicable member of the tribe she rules,

an ugly chap named Snake-Face. Luckily for Starlight, someone murders Snake-face by sticking a rattlesnake into his robe, but unluckily for Starlight, the Queen decides that the girl should accompany the corpse of Snakeface on its trip down the river in a funeral canoe.

Price augmented this promising story with a remarkable sequence devoted to the mourning rituals of Snakeface's clan following his death. Price was capable of making his loose, cartoony drawings assume power and a grim tone when the situation warranted it, and this sequence is probably his finest. Even the language suits the somber graphics: "Captained by a dead man, the funeral canoe waits for a living passenger." Another impressive graphic effect was having a black moose drag the travols with Starlight in it. Once again, it's *White Boy* to the rescue when it is explained to him that, if he can lasso Starlight before she goes over the falls in the funeral canoe, she will be spared (and, incidentally, become his betrothed).

White Boy wastes no time and manages to fling a rope to Starlight in time. However, the deranged Indian Grey-Gull foils the rescue attempt, cutting the line and upsetting the canoe so that all end up headed for the falls. It is the rotund Woodchuck who ends up saving *White Boy* and Starlight (the third time *White Boy* has been saved from drowning since the strip began), making him the automatic betrothed of Starlight if he can meet one final qualification—slaying an adult buffalo one-on-one. Needless to say, he fails, and *White Boy*'s romance, rather than a marriage, is preserved.

Eventually, the "Queen"—referred to as the Parasol Woman—explains why it is that she and her daughter are ruling an Indian tribe. It seems that she and her family were shipwrecked on their way back from Japan, and that the Indians who found them on the coast slew the men but allowed the women to live because their white and blond hair marked them as goddesses. The tribe then departed for the Yellowstone when a stronger tribe drove them away from the ocean's edge. (Some of their tale is related through sign language, a Price specialty.) And that was that: end of story, despite many unanswered questions.

The unfortunate thing about *White Boy* is that Price seldom harnessed his storytelling ability. A promising plot-line such as the one just related is vitiated by Price's refusal to get fully involved with the main story, interrupting himself with light subplots (Woodchuck trying to ski) and sustained nature notes. Compared to the lost-race stories that were popping up with regularity in such strips as *Tarzan* and *Brick Bradford*, it is small wonder that Price's oddball feature did not win the loyalty of the Sunday comics readers of America.

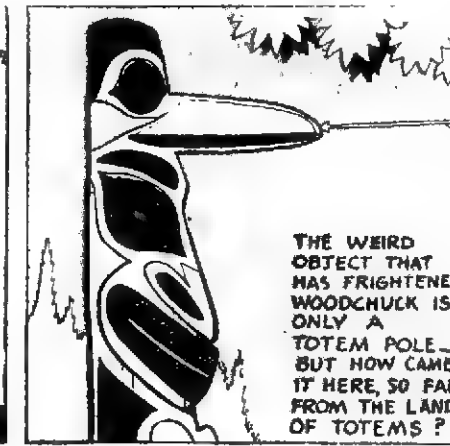
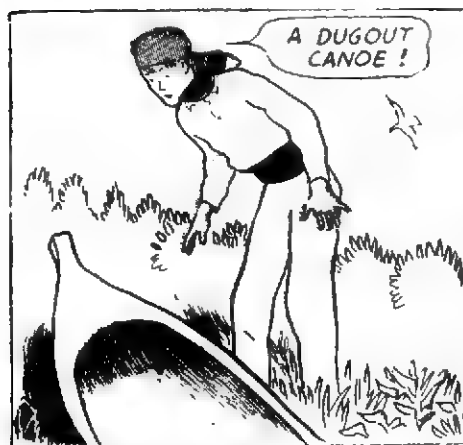
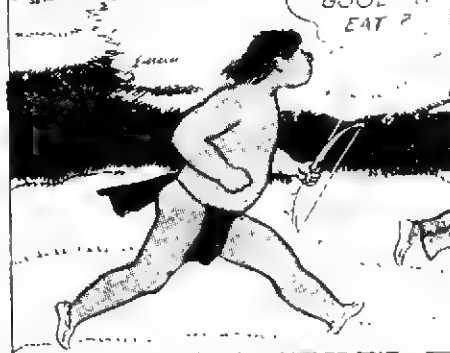
Although other, briefer episodes of *White Boy* would again demonstrate the unique charm that Price could evoke by mixing Indian lore with a young boy's adventures, Price was evidently advised by his syndicate that enthusiasm for *White Boy* was lukewarm. In the spring of 1935 he changed the setting to the Wild West, and the title to *White Boy in Skull Valley*, which soon thereafter became simply *Skull Valley*. Gone were the Indians; in their place were conventional badmen, stage-coach robbers and the like. The drawing, too, became less inventive, although Price seemed incapable of drawing conventionally. And so, after a year of cowboys 'n' badmen adventures, *Skull Valley* was cancelled and Price returned to cartooning and illustrating for the *New Yorker*.

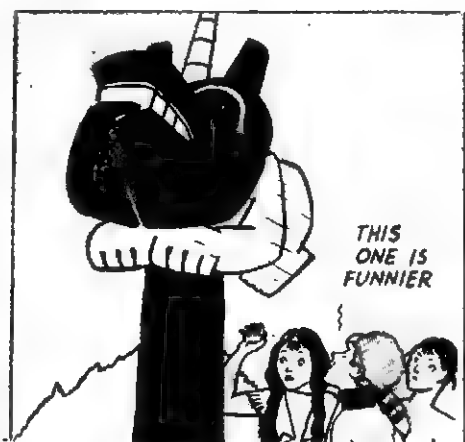
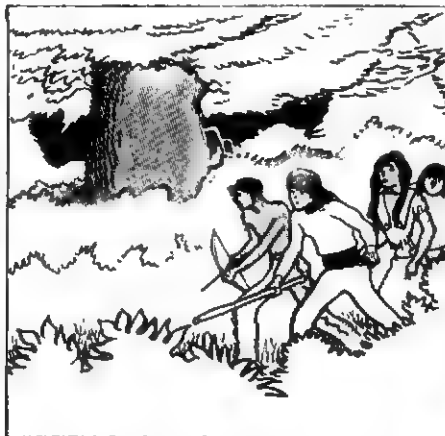
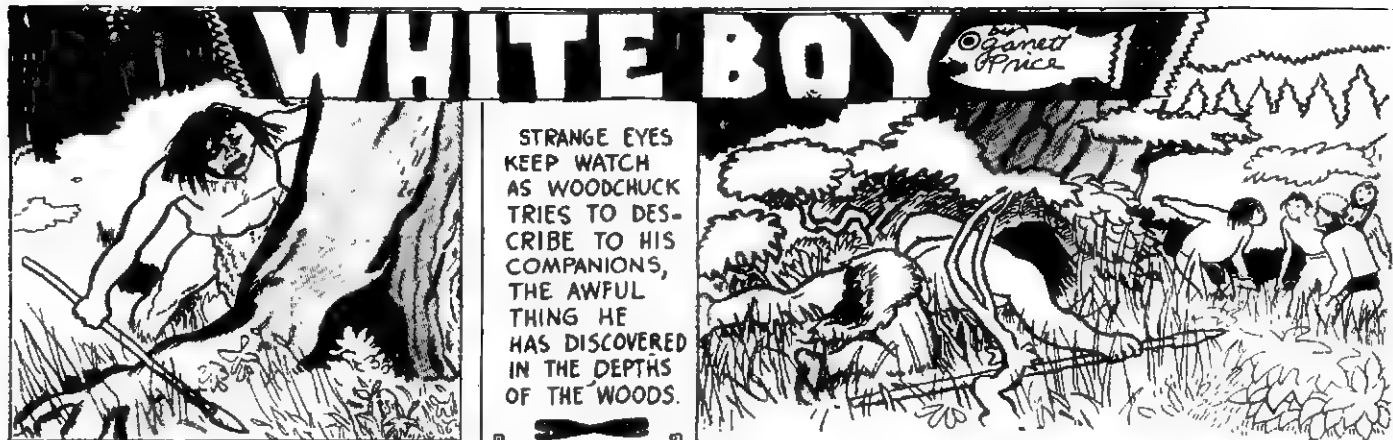
What is the place of *White Boy* in comics history? Barely a footnote. Still, its truly unique qualities enabled it to look as fresh as when it appeared in 1933—which is more than one can say of many of the day's more celebrated adventure strips. Garrett Price's failures as a storyteller will probably deny *White Boy* of reaching cult status, but its merits—the drawing, the use of Indian characters and lore, and that ineffable quality known as charm—far outweigh its shortcomings.



WHITE BOY

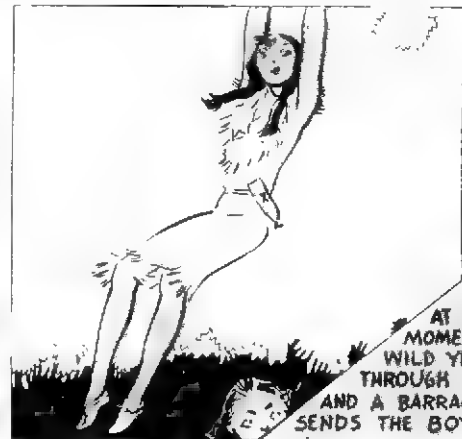
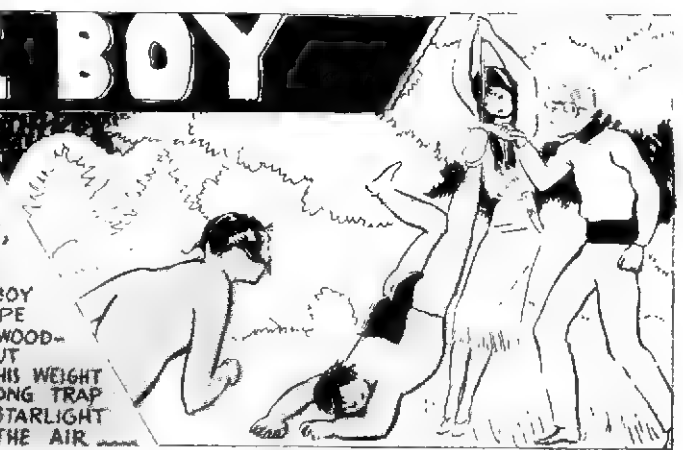
by Garret Price



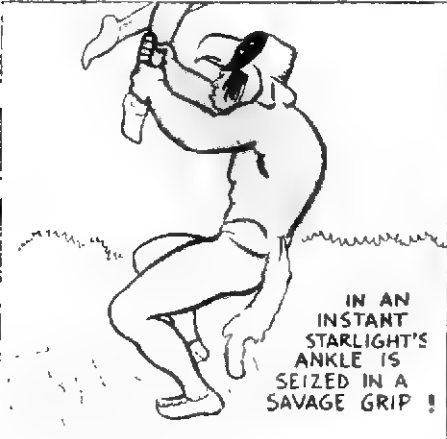
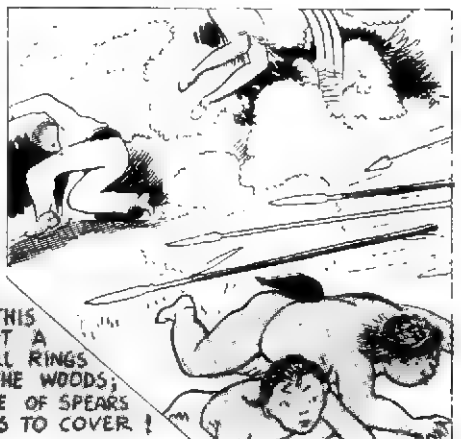


WHITE BOY

STARLIGHT, SWIFTER THAN THE OTHERS, REACHES WOODCHUCK FIRST. UP SHE LEAPS AND GRASPS THE RAWHIDE ROPE, PULLING DOWN WITH ALL HER MIGHT. WHITEBOY CUTS THE ROPE, RELEASING WOODCHUCK; BUT WITHOUT HIS WEIGHT THE STRONG TRAP JERKS STARLIGHT INTO THE AIR.



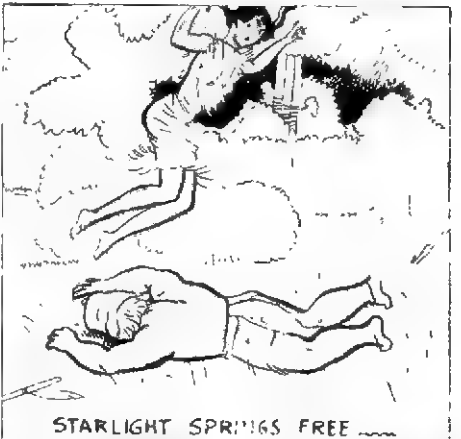
AT THIS MOMENT A WILD YELL RINGS THROUGH THE WOODS, AND A BARRAGE OF SPEARS SENDS THE BOYS TO COVER!



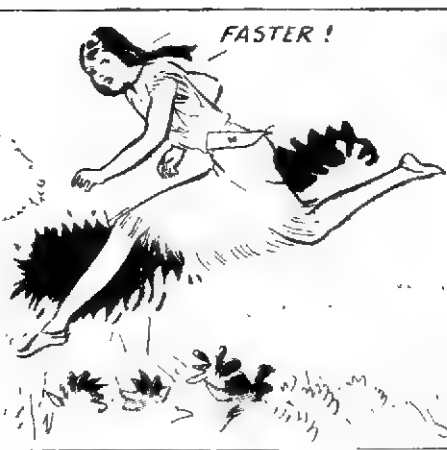
IN AN INSTANT STARLIGHT'S ANKLE IS SEIZED IN A SAVAGE GRIP!



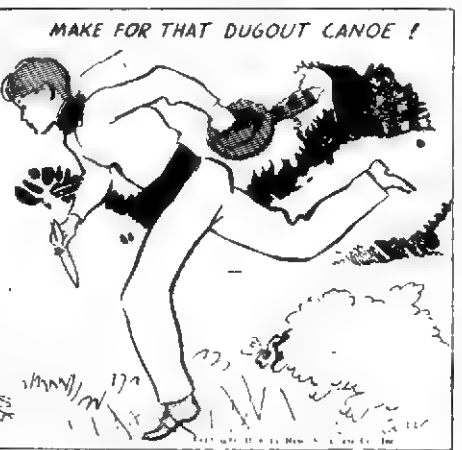
WHITEBOY HURLS A ROCK WHICH DROPS THE FIERCE CREATURE!



STARLIGHT SPRINGS FREE



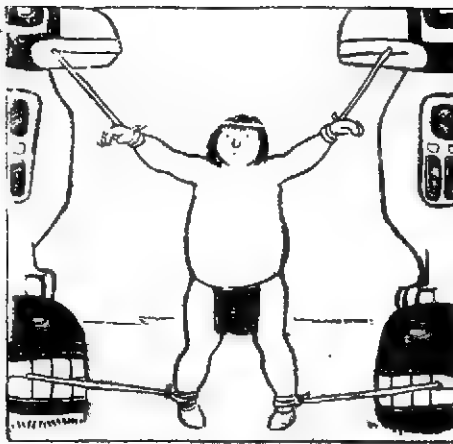
FASTER!



MAKE FOR THAT DUGOUT CANOE!



UNLUCKY WOODCHUCK TRIPS, AND THE LITTLE MEN ARE UPON HIM!



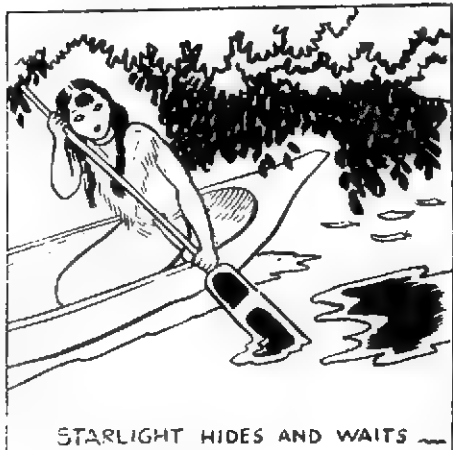
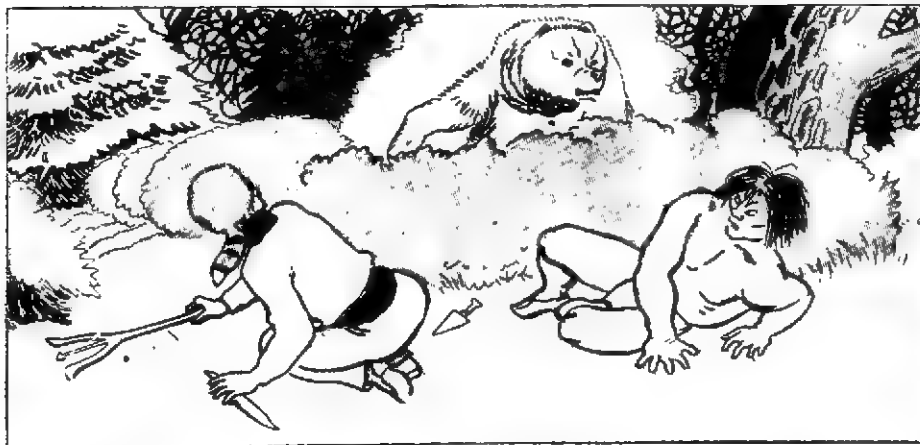
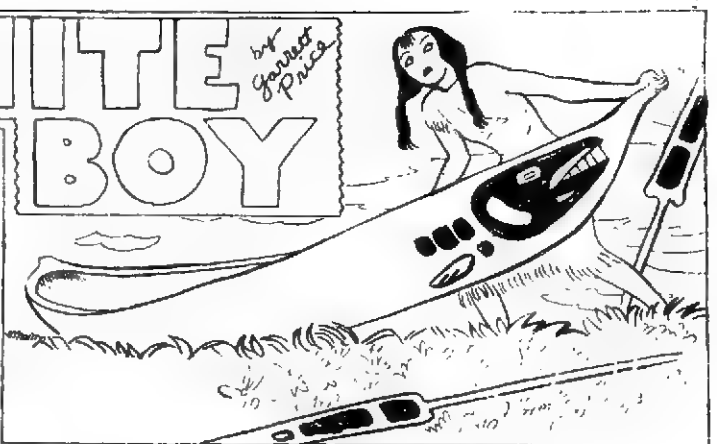
WHITE BOY

by Gower Price

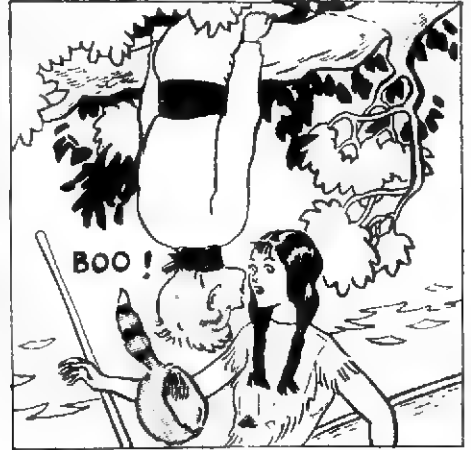
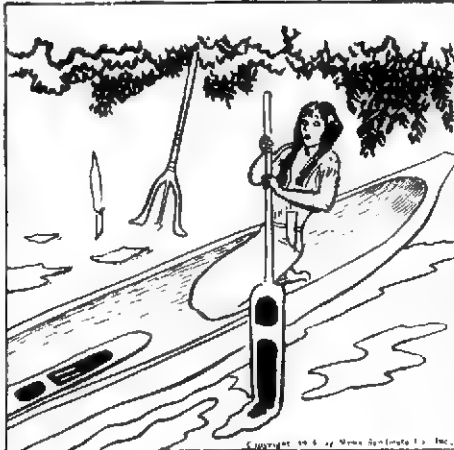
WOODCHUCK IS CAPTURED BY THE LITTLE-MEN.

STARLIGHT REACHES THE CANOE IN SAFETY.

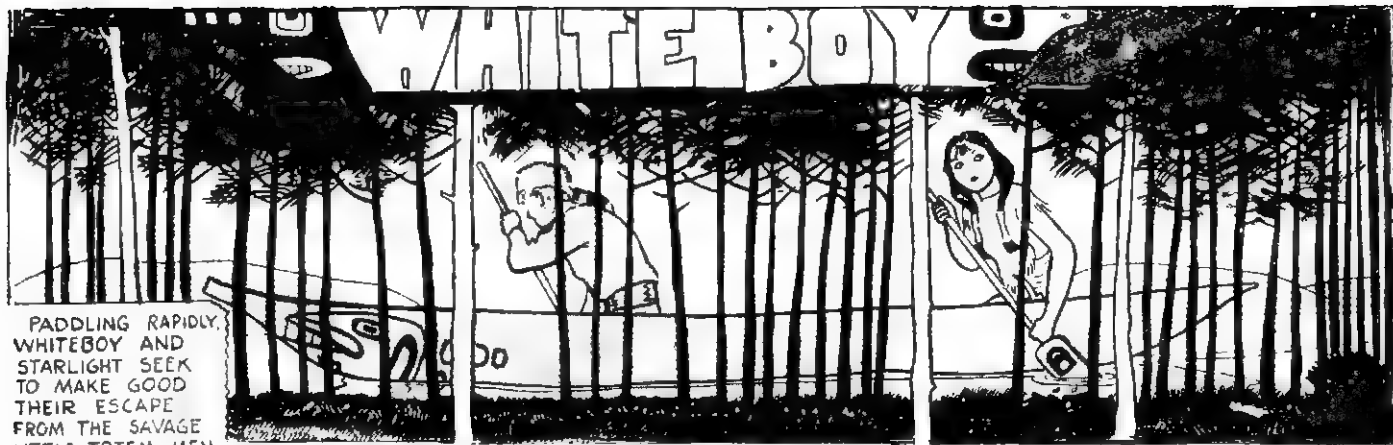
WHITEBOY, YARDS BEHIND STARLIGHT, PAUSES TO PICK UP AN ODD LOOKING SPEAR



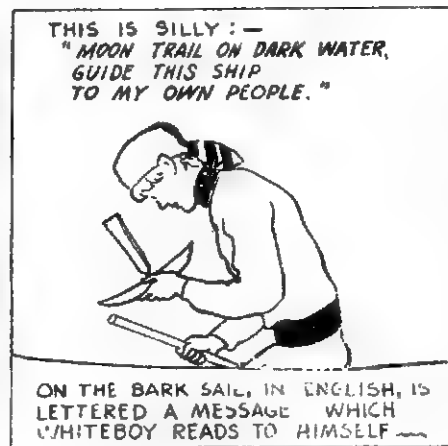
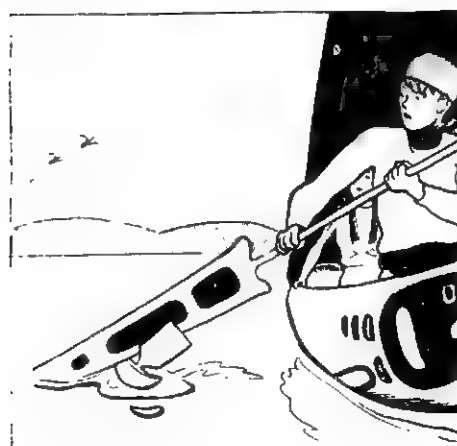
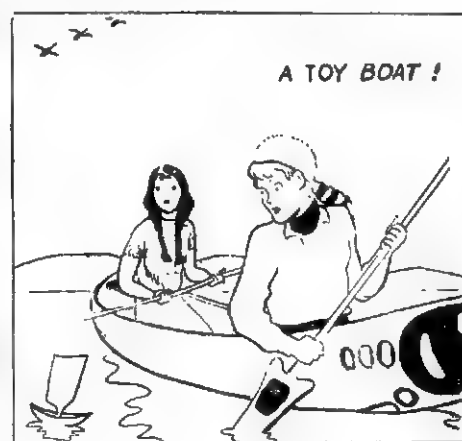
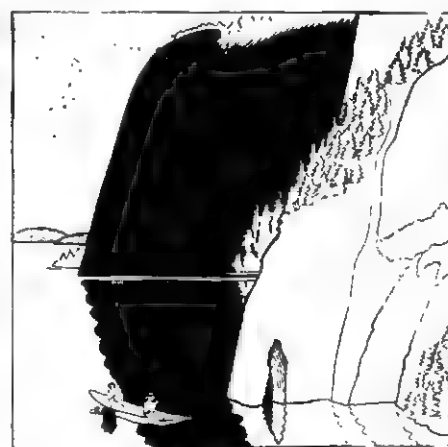
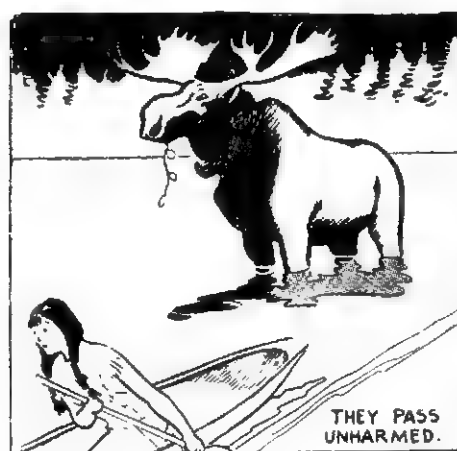
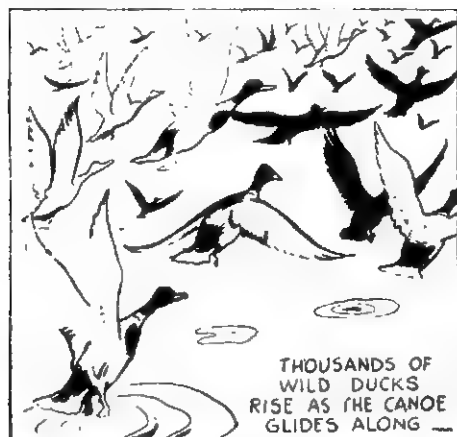
STARLIGHT HIDES AND WAITS

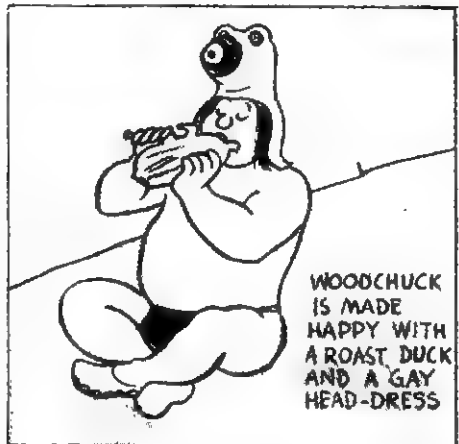
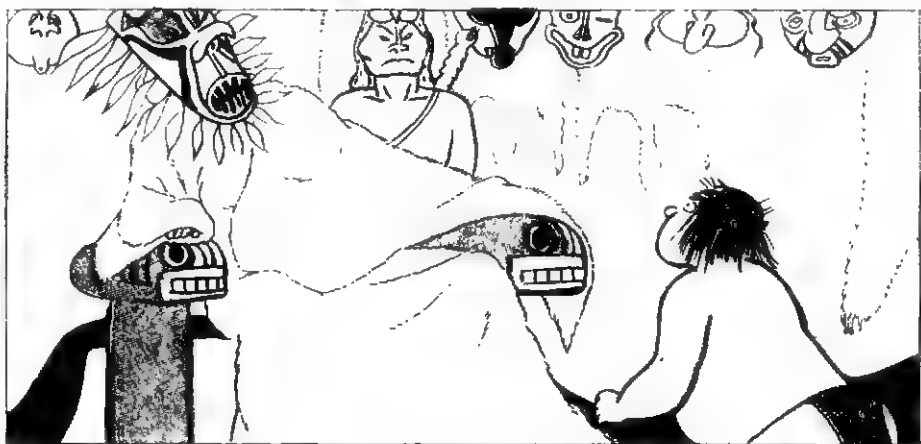
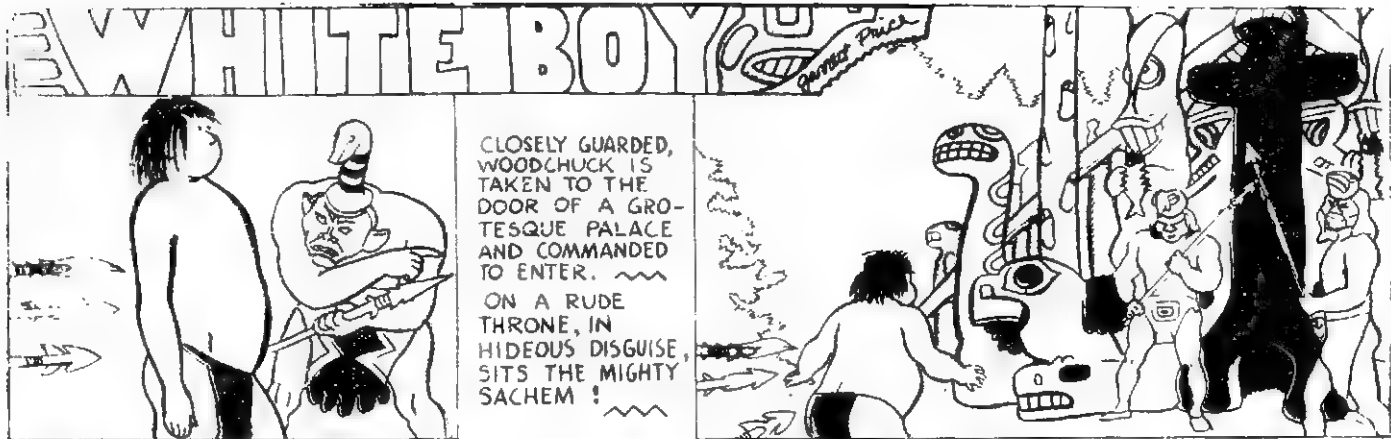


BOO !

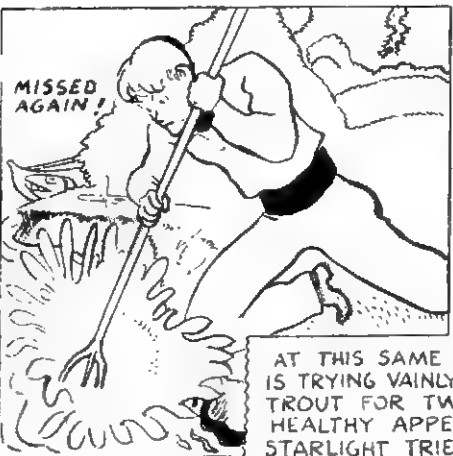


PADDLING RAPIDLY, WHITEBOY AND STARLIGHT SEEK TO MAKE GOOD THEIR ESCAPE FROM THE SAVAGE LITTLE TOTEM MEN





WOODCHUCK EXPECTS SOME AWFUL TORTURE — INSTEAD HE HEARS A QUIET LAUGH AND THE OFFICIAL SIGN-TALKER ASKS HIM TO MAKE KNOWN HIS WANTS ~~~



AT THIS SAME TIME, WHITEBOY IS TRYING VAINLY TO SPEAR TROUT FOR TWO OTHER HEALTHY APPETITES. FINALLY STARLIGHT TRIES HER HAND —



WHITE BOY

Bar
Garrett
Price



IT WILL SOON BE DARK, AND STARLIGHT AND WHITEBOY REALIZE THAT THEY MUST MAKE CAMP. A SHALLOW CAVE SEEMS TO PROMISE THE MOST PROTECTION. THEY BEACH THE CANOE AND PREPARE FOR THE NIGHT.



I'LL STAND WATCH THE FIRST PART OF THE NIGHT, AND KEEP THE FIRE GOING



GOOD NIGHT!



AS WHITEBOY SITS DROWSILY STARING ACROSS THE LAKE, HE IS AWARE THAT A CANOE IS APPROACHING, PHANTOM-LIKE, ALONG THE MOON'S GLITTERING PATH.



THE CANOE LANDS. THE OCCUPANT, CLIMBING UPON A LEDGE, STANDS POISED FOR A MOMENT IN AN ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP.



COULD THIS HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE NOTE I PICKED UP TODAY?



THEN THERE IS A SPLASH — THE FIGURE HAS PLUNGED INTO THE POOL.



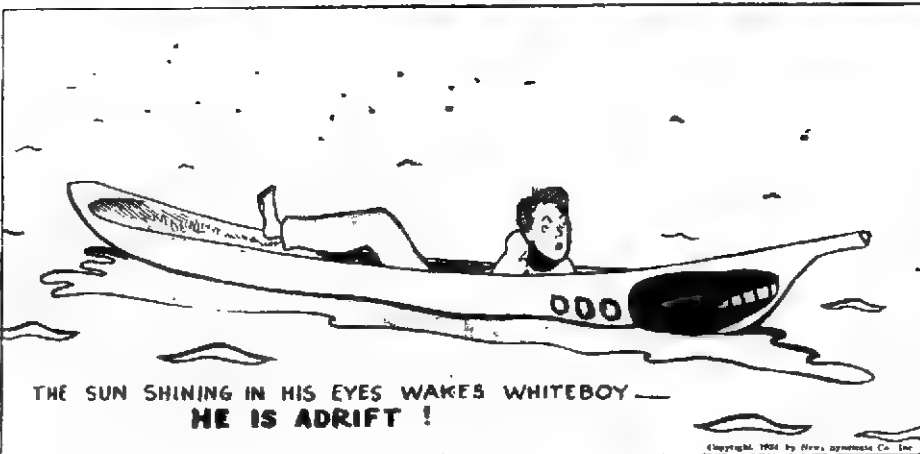
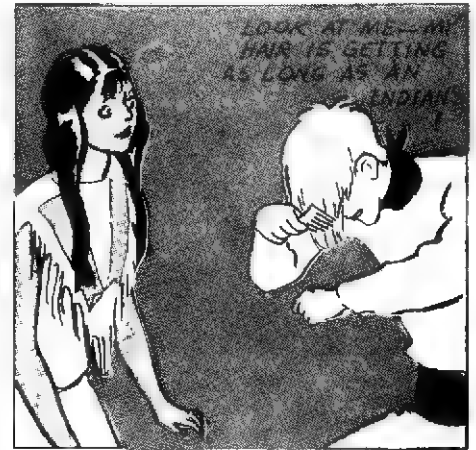
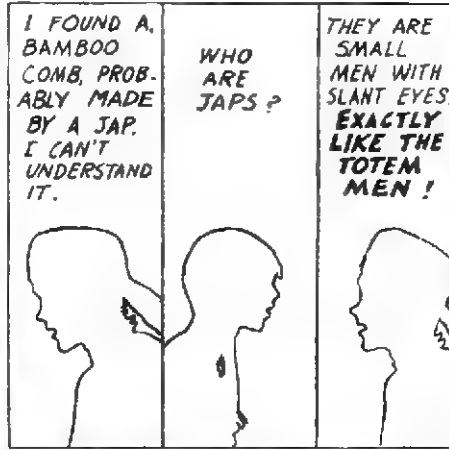
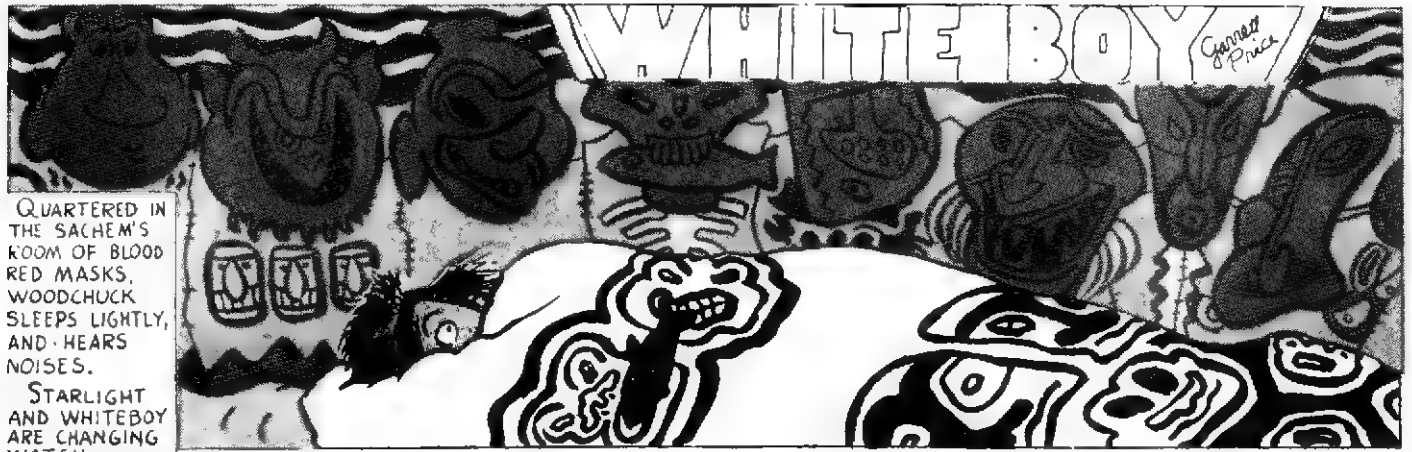
WHITEBOY CREEPS NEARER; BUT BEFORE HE CAN REACH THE SPOT, THE MOON-WORSHIPER IS SLIDING AWAY LIKE A SHADOW. AN OBJECT GLISTENS ON THE LEDGE!



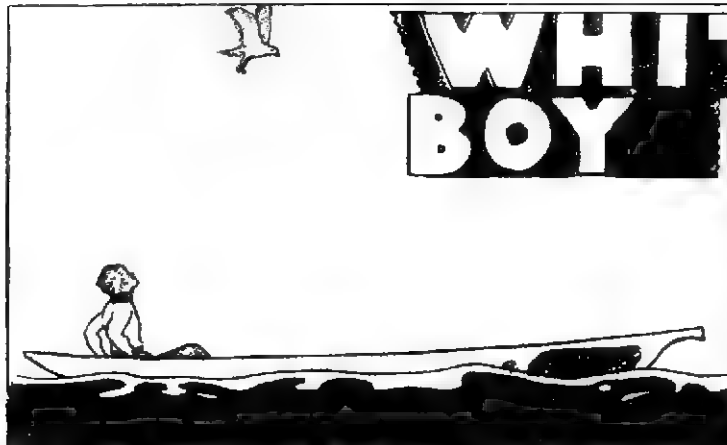
HE LEFT SOMETHING!



IT PROVES TO BE A COMB, CARVED FROM A PIECE OF BAMBOO!



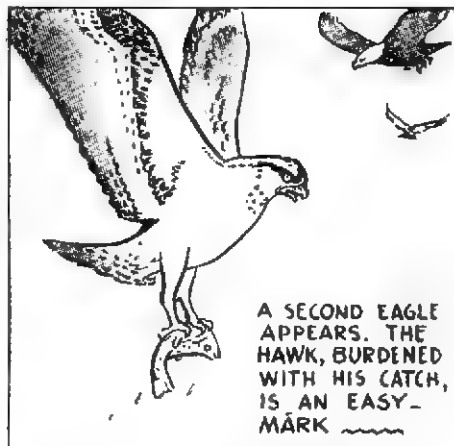
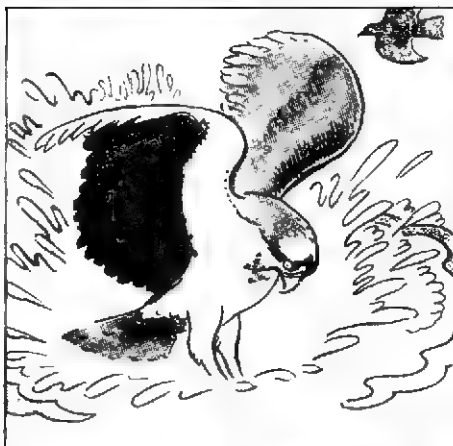
WHITE BOY



WHITEBOY, ADRIFT AND HELPLESS, WITHOUT SAIL OR PADDLE, FORGETS HIS TROUBLES FOR A MOMENT TO WATCH A FISH-HAWK AS IT CIRCLES ABOVE A FEEDING TROUT.



FISH LOVER, BUT NO FISHERMAN, A BALD EAGLE KEEPS AN EYE ON THE FISH-HAWK'S LUCK.



A SECOND EAGLE APPEARS. THE HAWK, BURDENED WITH HIS CATCH, IS AN EASY-MARK



I'D LIKE A TROUT FOR BREAKFAST TOO



POWERFUL WINGS BUFFET THE HAWK. HE DROPS HIS PREY.



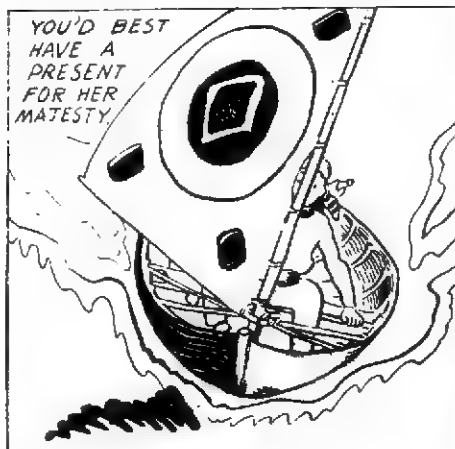
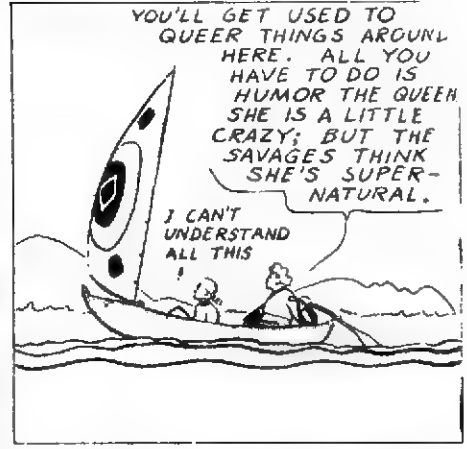
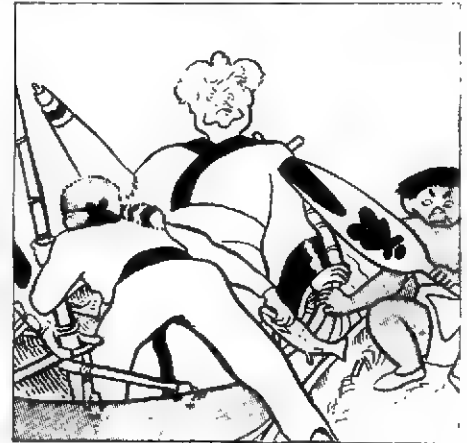
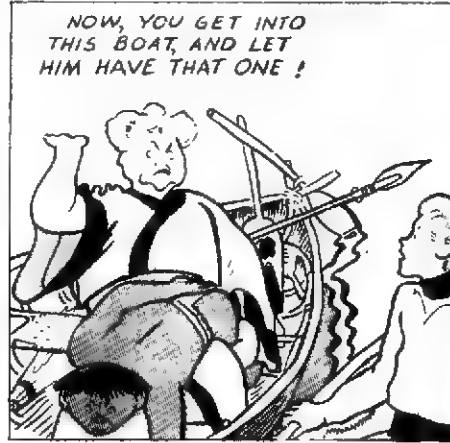
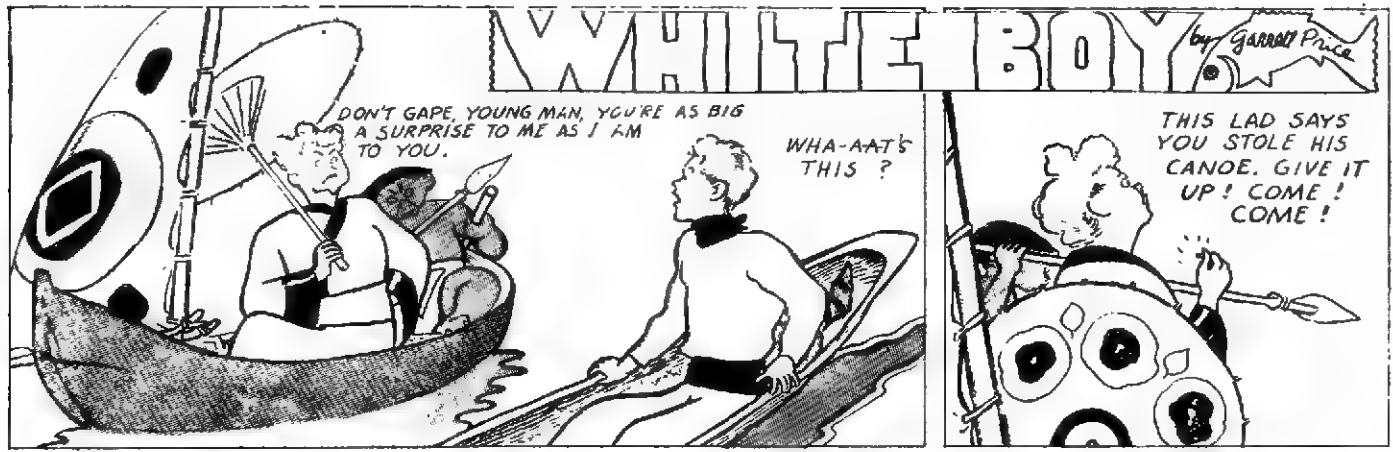
THE EAGLES SWOOP TO SEIZE THE FALLING FISH; BUT WHITEBOY DISTURBS THEIR AIM.



IF SOMETHING DOESN'T TURN UP, I MAY HAVE TO EAT THIS FISH RAW —



WHITEBOY, SOMETHING IS TURNING UP. ISN'T THAT A SAIL BOAT AND LOOK AT THAT PARASOL ?



WHITE BOY



DURING THE NIGHT WHEN STARLIGHT WAS ON WATCH, SHE WAS DRAWN FROM HER POST BY AN UNUSUAL NOISE.

NOT AN ARROW'S FLIGHT FROM HER, DISCOURAGED BY A NEA-CORN GEYSER, HALF A MOUNTAIN WAS SLIDING TOWARD THE LAKE



THOUSANDS OF TONS OF EARTH AND ROCK CRASHED INTO THE WATER.



A HUGE WAVE SURGED ACROSS THE LAKE, CARRYING THE SLEEPING BOY FAR FROM SHORE



BEFORE STARLIGHT COULD HELP WHITEBOY, SHE WAS SEIZED FROM BEHIND AND HER WRISTS CLAMPED INTO PRIMITIVE HAND CUFFS



RETURNING TO WHITEBOY AND HIS STRANGE RESCUER

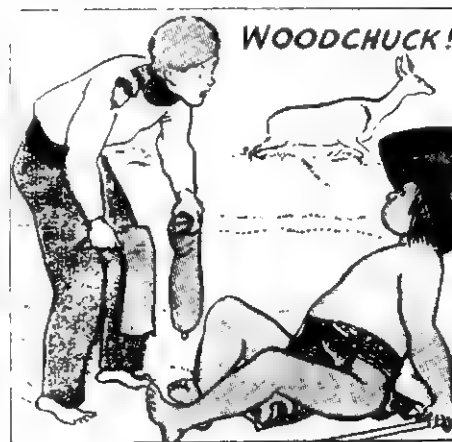
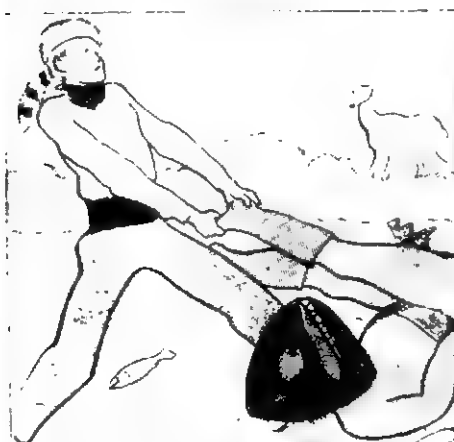
GO WITH THAT GUARD TO THE QUEEN'S LODGE. I'M GOING TO HAVE SOME TEA.



OW ! PINE CONES !



SEE HERE, MR QUEEN'S GUARD, I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT THOSE BOOTS, BUT THEY BELONG TO ME !



WOODCHUCK !



SIGN FOR CRAZY

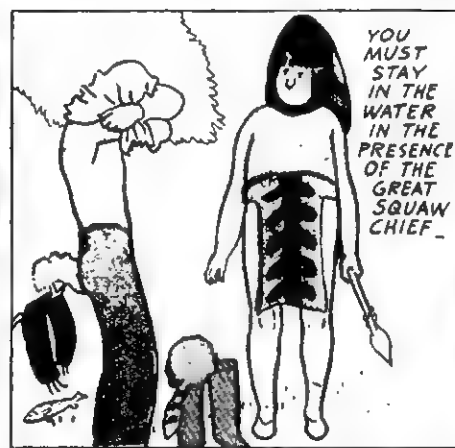
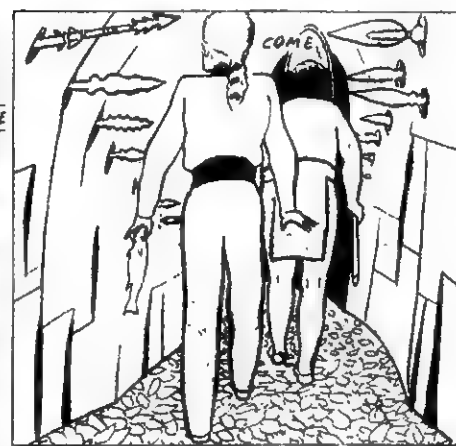
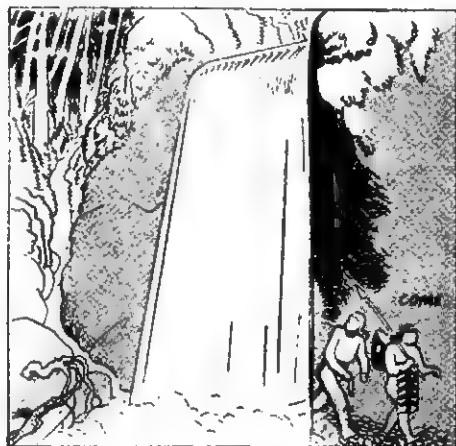
WOODCHUCK TELLS HIS FRIEND THAT EVERYTHING AROUND IS CRAZY WHICH WHITEBOY IS QUITE READY TO BELIEVE

WHITE BOY

by *Sammy Price*



POMPOUSLY, WOODCHUCK LEADS HIS BEWILDERED FRIEND ALONG A PATH OF WONDERS TO A SECRET ENTRANCE OF THE TOTEM PALACE



WHITEBOY

SO WOODCHUCK TOLD
YOU TO INVADE THE
PALACE, BY WAY OF
THE ROYAL SPRING?

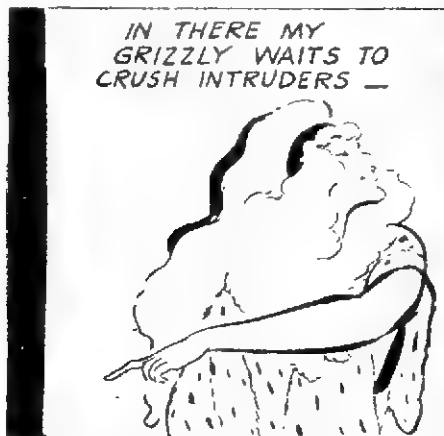
YES,
MAM-

Garrett
Price

HE IS MY
CLOWN. I
GIVE ORDERS
AROUND HERE!
THE MOON AND
I RULE THE
MOUNTAINS,
LAKES AND
WOODS!



HEREAFTER,
WOODCHUCK
SHALL MILK
THE
GOATS
FOR MY
KITTENS-



IN THERE MY
GRIZZLY WAITS TO
CRUSH INTRUDERS -



WHITE-BOY
OWN
KIND-



I KNOW! YOU ARE
FROM THE MOON! YOU CAME
IN ANSWER TO MY MESSAGE!
YOU ARE THE
PRINCE! YOU
ARE MY HEIR!



THE GONG!
COURT IS
CALLED.
DIVE BACK
GET YOUR
CLOTHES.
APPEAR AT
THE COURT
LODGE



BOOTS GONE!
I THOUGHT AS
MUCH -

OUTSIDE ONCE MORE,
WHITEBOY DETERMINES TO
FLEE FROM THE MADNESS
WHICH SURROUNDS HIM.



RUNNING
AWAY
LIKE A
COW-
ARD?

YOU,
AGA'N?



STARLIGHT

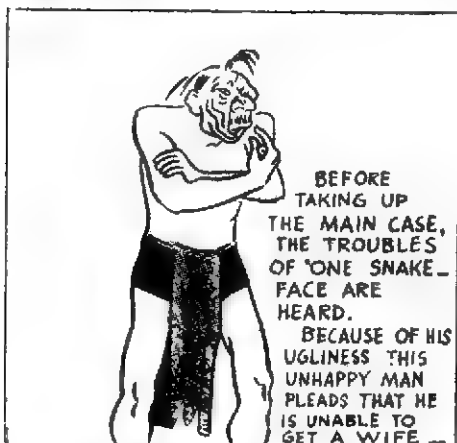
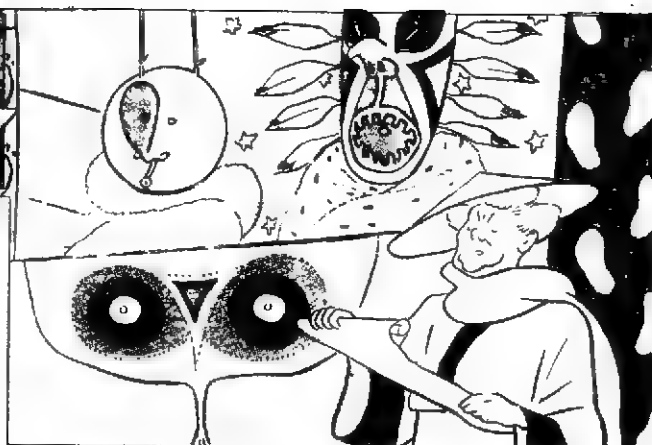
"DON'T MISS COUR"
SAYS THE PARASOL WOMAN,
"AN INDIAN GIRL WAS
FOUND WEARING THE
QUEEN'S OWN COMB -
NO SMALL OFFENSE!"



I AM COURT
CRIER, CLERK
AND PROSECUTING
ATTORNEY— YOU
ARE TO SIT BEHIND
THE MOON MASK AND
ACT CELESTIAL— FOOLS
THE NATIVES,
YOU KNOW

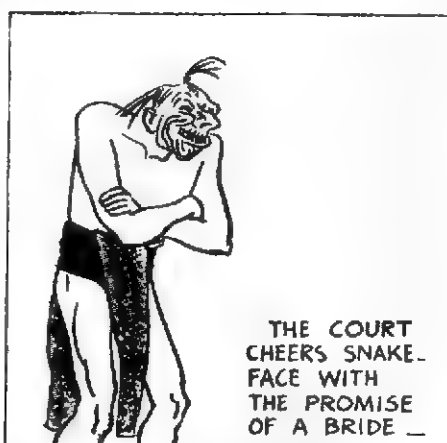
WHITE BOY

THE IMPORTANT
CASE ON THE COURT
DOCKET READS THUS:—
"INDIAN GIRL, NAME
OF STARLIGHT, CAUGHT
WEARING THE QUEEN'S
COMB ON THE NIGHT
OF THE ROYAL CERE-
MONIAL MOON BATH."

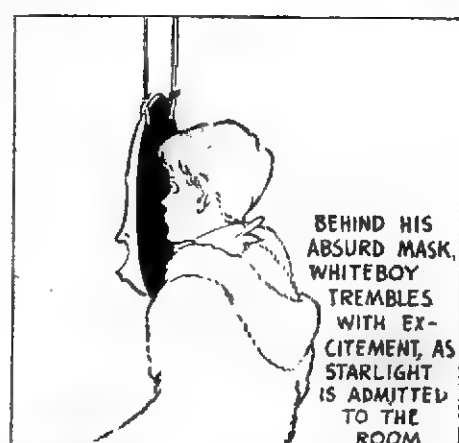


BEFORE
TAKING UP
THE MAIN CASE,
THE TROUBLES
OF 'ONE SNAKE-
FACE ARE
HEARD.

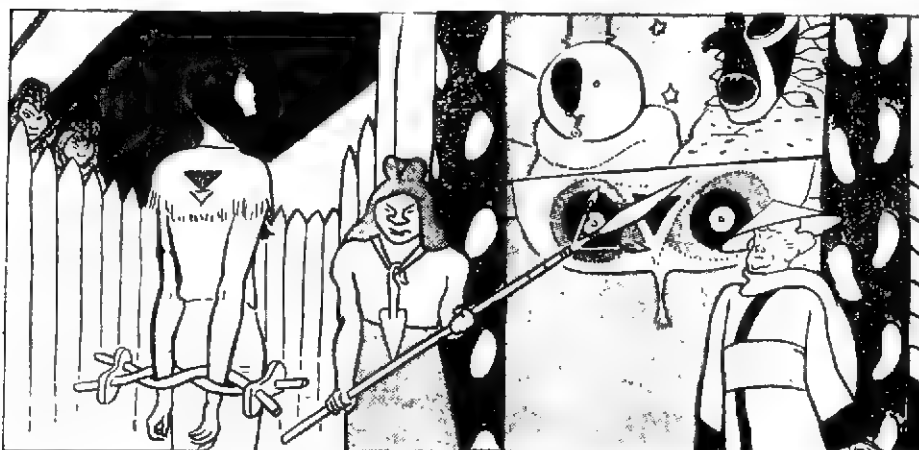
BECAUSE OF HIS
UGLINESS THIS
UNHAPPY MAN
PLEADS THAT HE
IS UNABLE TO
GET A WIFE —



THE COURT
CHEERS SNAKE-
FACE WITH
THE PROMISE
OF A BRIDE —



BEHIND HIS
ABSURD MASK,
WHITEBOY
TREMBLES
WITH EX-
CITEMENT, AS
STARLIGHT
IS ADMITTED
TO THE
ROOM —



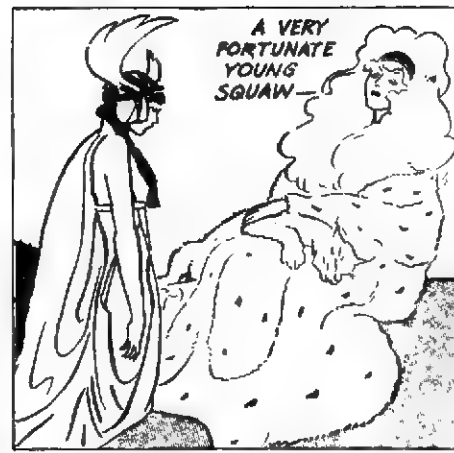
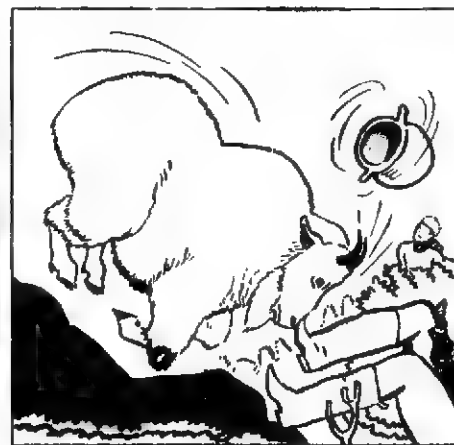
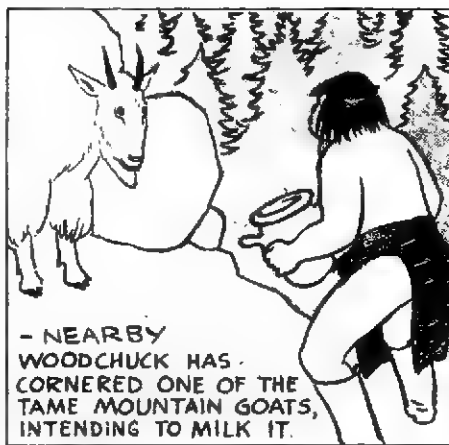
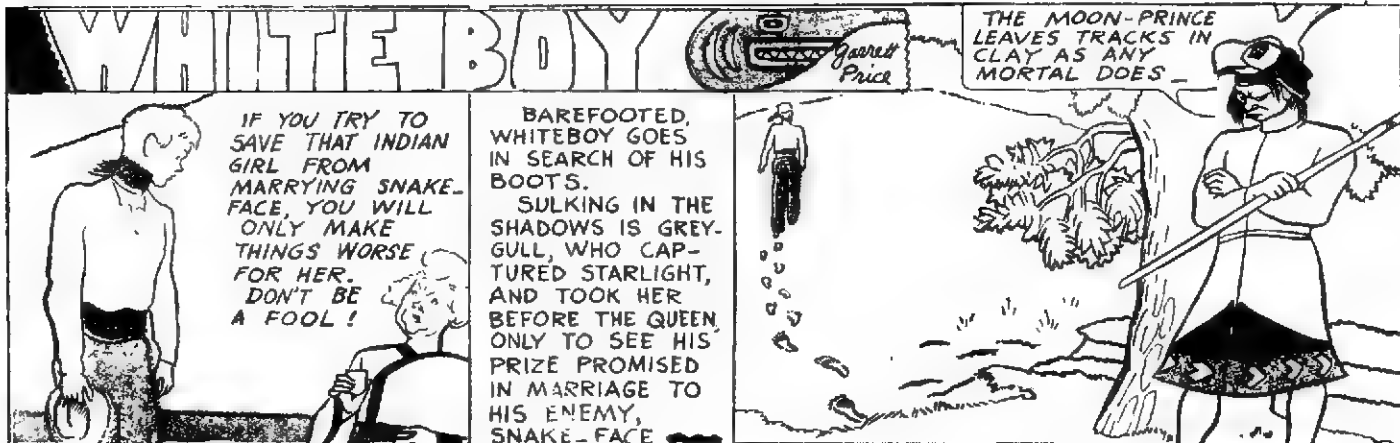
AT A SIGNAL, A DOOR
OPENS, AND A LARGE LAZY BEAR
STALKS IN BEHIND STARLIGHT.



NOT KNOWING THE BEAR IS A
TAME ONE, WHITEBOY SHOUTS A
WARNING TO STARLIGHT —



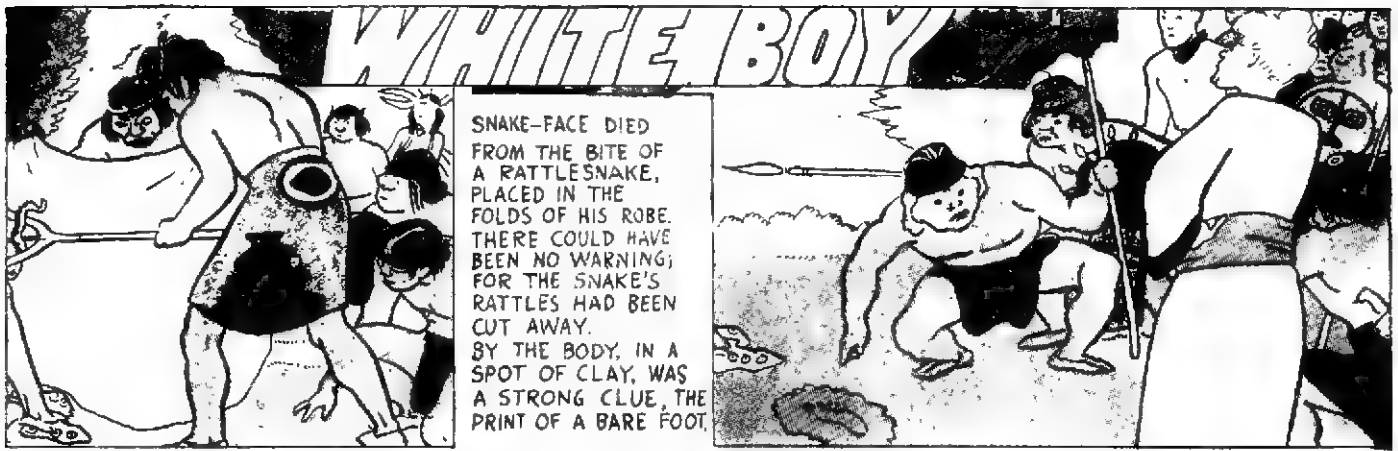
AH, THE MOON
PRINCE MUST BE
SAVED
FROM
THAT SIREN!
SHE
MARRIES
SNAKE-FACE



IN A LUXURIOUS BRIDAL CANOE STARLIGHT IS BORNE WITH PRIMITIVE POMP TO A SPOT AT THE WATER'S EDGE WHERE WAITS THE GROOM TO PADDLE AWAY WITH HER ON THEIR HONEYMOON.



THE GROOM WAITS QUIETLY, FOR SOMEONE HAS KILLED HIM.





SAVAGE MOURNING RITES ARE OBSERVED BY THE RELATIVES OF SNAKE-FACE: THE FULL WEIGHT OF A BUFFALO SKULL TUGS AT THE EAR LOBES OF THE FATHER —

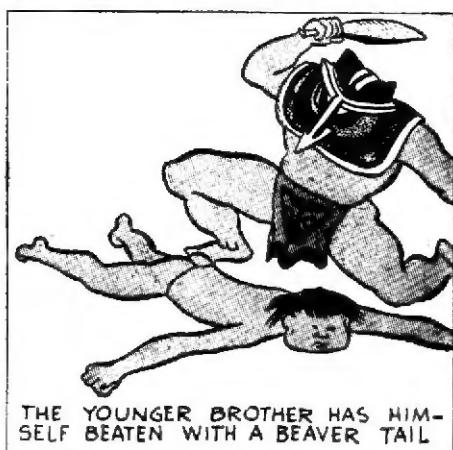
TO THE OUT-STRETCHED ARMS OF THE OLDER BROTHER IS BOUND THE DEAD MAN'S CANOE PADDLE.



THE SISTER BEARS THE PAIN OF AN OWL'S TORTURING CLAWS, TIED TO HER HAND.



THE GRIEVING MOTHER BOWS BENEATH A PETRIFIED LOG —



THE YOUNGER BROTHER HAS HIMSELF BEATEN WITH A BEAVER TAIL



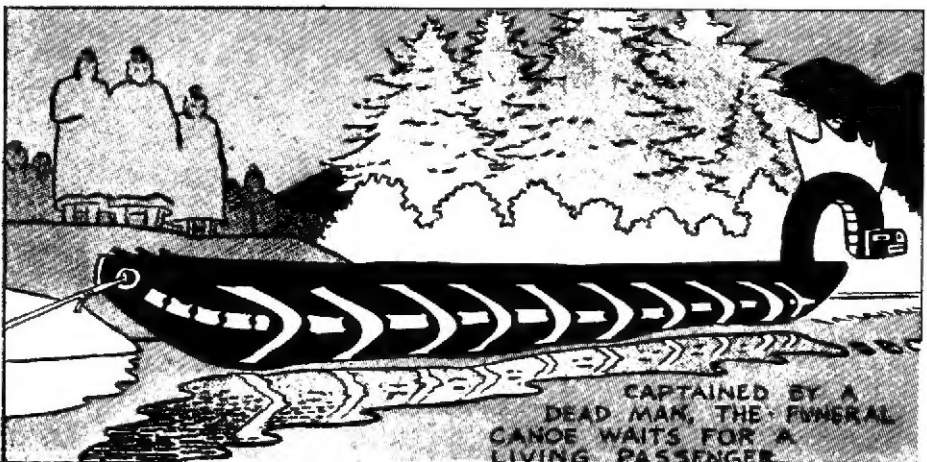
WOODCHUCK WILL TELL US WHAT MY FATE IS TO BE



STARLIGHT HAS TO RIDE OVER THE FALLS IN THE FUNERAL CANOE WITH THE BODY!



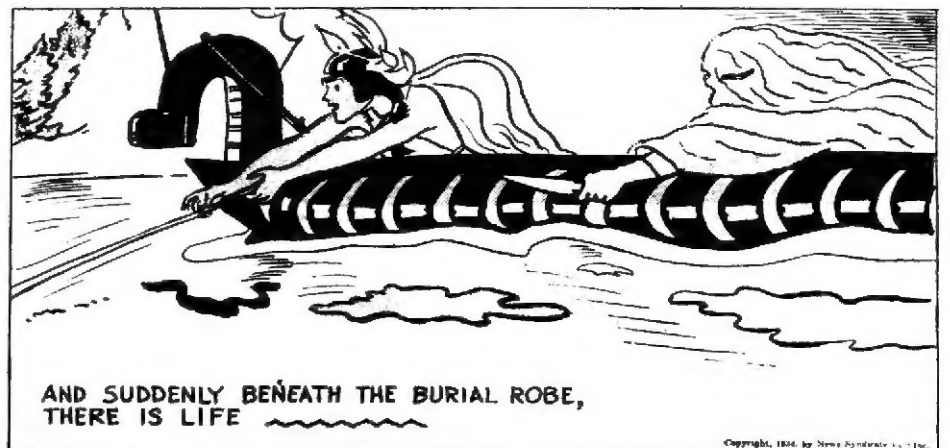
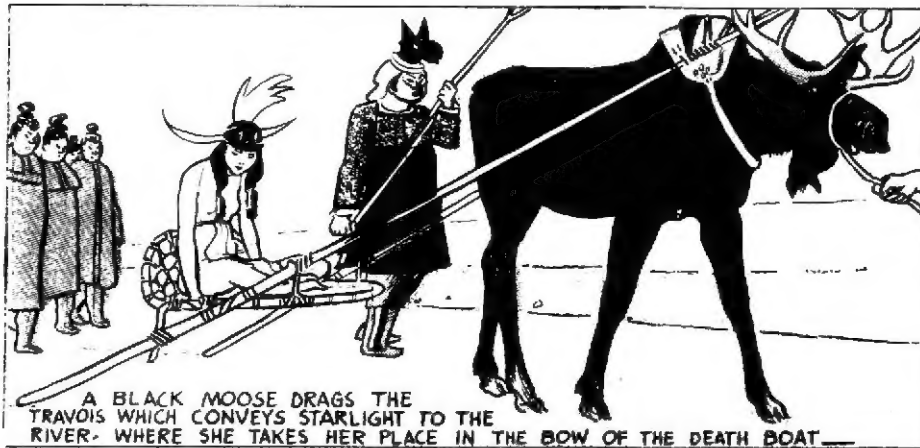
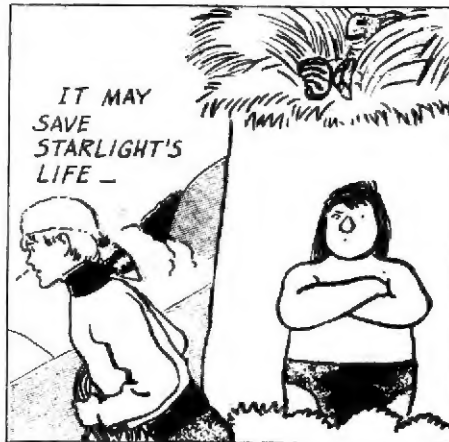
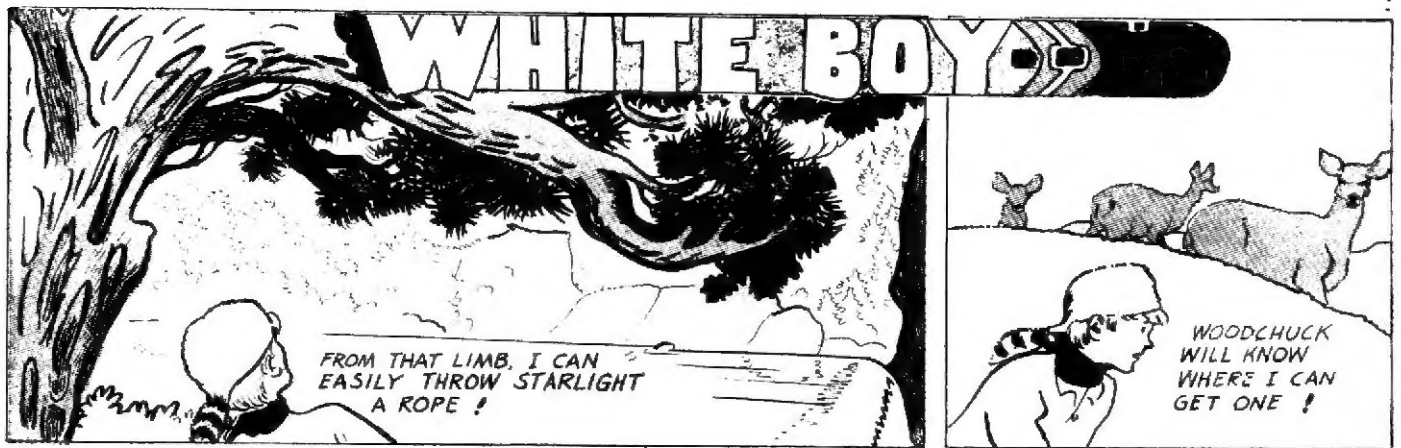
PERHAPS THOSE CRAZY PEOPLE WILL LISTEN TO ME! I'LL TRY —



CAPTAINED BY A DEAD MAN, THE FUNERAL CANOE WAITS FOR A LIVING PASSENGER.



THE GIRL WILL BE SAVED, IF ANY MAN WANTS HER. ALL HE DOES IS CLIMB OUT ON A LIMB AND LASSO HER. THEN THEY ARE MARRIED — CLEVER CUSTOM.





WE SHALL GO
OVER THE FALLS
AND DIE TOGETHER!

WHITE BOY

UNDER THE SHROUDS
OF THE BURIAL
CANOE WAS
HIDDEN, NOT A
CORPSE, BUT THE
JEALOUS GREY-GULL
INSANE IN HIS
LOVE FOR STAR-
LIGHT, HE SEEKS
TO CUT THE ROPE,
THROWN TO HER
FROM SHORE BY
AN UNKNOWN
HAND—



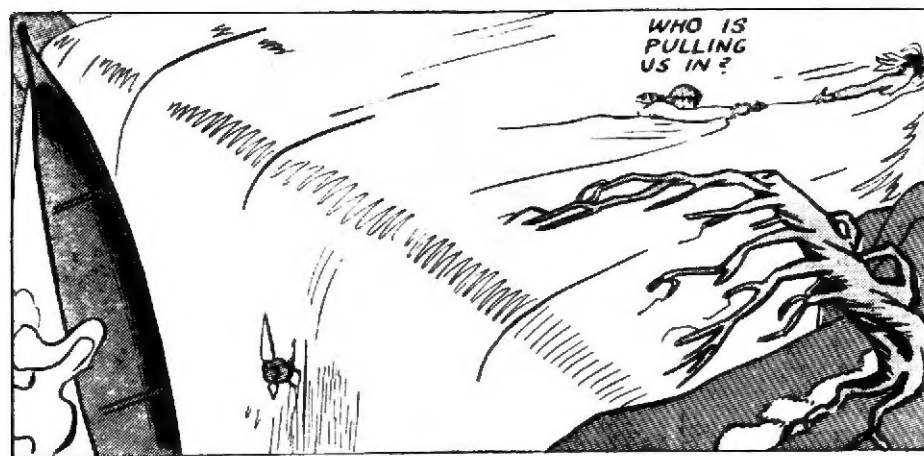
FROM ABOVE,
WHITEBOY
TOSSES A LARIAT
OVER GREY-
GULL'S ARM—



GREY-
GULL
CUTS
THE
TUGGING
LARIAT—



THE CANOE UPSETS — WHITEBOY,
THROWN OFF BALANCE, FALLS.
CLINGING TIGHTLY TO THE ONE ROPE,
STARLIGHT GRASPS THE OTHER ALSO



WHO IS
PULLING
US IN?



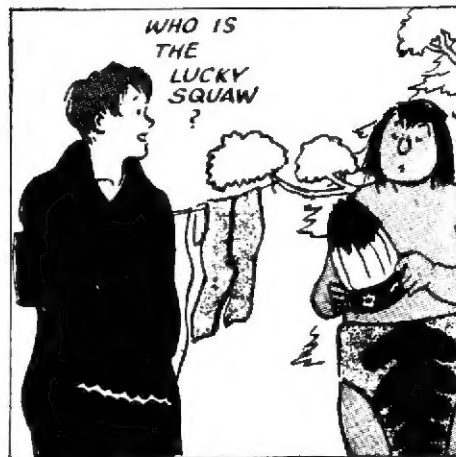
WOODCHUCK
!



An Hour Later

WHAT DOES
THAT
FANCY
HAT
MEAN?

IT SHOWS
I'M TO BE
MARRIED.



WHO IS
THE
LUCKY
SQUAW?



STARLIGHT, IT'S
THE CUSTOM. ALL I
HAVE TO DO NOW
IS KILL A
BULL
BUFFALO.

